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Edited by PETER HUGH REED



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Joseph Szipeti

1938



THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

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Insert: Prominent Musical Personalities — Past and Present

No. 19 — JOSEPH SZIGETI (By Request)

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THE CHAMBER MUSIC OF JOHANNES BRAHMS

EMIL V. BENEDICT

THE RECENT RELEASE BY VICTOR OF Brahms' *Quintet in F*, Op. 88 (set M-466), not only enriches the repertoire of recorded music but is more than usually significant in that it finally makes available, in electrical recordings, all of the composer's twenty-four chamber works. True, a little more than half of them are each represented by a single recording, but these inevitably will be brought up to date and subsequent duplications of the others will afford a more varied selection and possibly improve on some not up to present standards.

Just as no recording company made any particular effort to hasten the availability of these masterpieces, so did it take many years for the musical public properly to understand and appreciate Brahms. This was in great part due to a false tradition handed on by some of the early interpreters. They could not or would not see the inherent lyrical beauties in his scores, thereby denying to listeners the emotional urge that abounds in so many of them. We are indebted to the later conductors, performers, and critics for their discovery of the warmth and humanity in Brahms. They did much to dispel the old notion that his music was dull, dry and devoid of color. The romantic side of the Master gradually emerged and today he stands in his rightful place with the loftiest creators of all time.

Along with many others, I have always felt that the chamber works rank with the greatest of Brahms' output in other fields and they reflect, perhaps more so than the others, the simplicity, strength, and universality of the man. Here is music that breathes beauty and dignity, completely avoids ostentation or sensationalism, always extending a friendly hand to those who feel drawn to its human tenderness and warm sentiment.

The writing of the chamber works occupied Brahms from his twenty-first year until the

last years of his life. They present an interesting insight into his tremendous growth as a composer; it is a far cry from the merely youthful impetuosity and slightly crude utterance of the *Trio in B Major*, Op. 8, to the gentle warmth and autumnal beauty of the gravely dignified and bardic *Quintet for Clarinet and Strings in B Minor*, Op. 115, a human document unique in musical literature.

The version of the *Trio in B Major* that we hear today is far from the original work composed in 1854 and, strange to say, first performed in New York City the following year. In 1891, Brahms, realizing its crudities and technical shortcomings, made extensive revisions. Most of the themes remain but the complete mastery acquired through the years brushed aside the difficulties encountered by the immature youth of 1854 and while the *Trio* in its present form is alive with youthful freshness, in craftsmanship it may well be considered a product of the mature Master. The chief revisions were made in the first and last movements, and as the original suffered from inordinate length, Brahms excised many discursive patches, discarding approximately four hundred and fifty bars. The sole existing recording is the Polydor-Brunswick, played by the Elly Ney Trio. Tonally it is satisfactory, but while the piano part is adequate, the same cannot be said of the strings and the performance fails to realize the composer's intentions to any great extent. Here, indeed, is room for a definitive version.

With the *String Sextet in B Flat*, Op. 18, Brahms made a tremendous leap forward, showing clearly that in the space of a few years he had, through intense study and a sobering of his outlook, reached musical adolescence. His earlier compositions had been stamped to some extent by the influence of Schumann, but the *Sextet* brought him back to the classic soil of Beethoven. This fine work is notable for its amply planned

architecture, richness of tone and heartwarming melody. Particularly impressive are the variations in the second movement. Brahms was passionately fond of the variation form and his chamber music abounds in many superb examples of his consummate mastery of that form. If the Victor recording by the Pro Arte Quartet, with Hobday and Pini, does not explore it to the utmost, it can be accounted a good performance and the recording is generally adequate if somewhat thin on machines of ordinary range.

Turning from the somewhat sober classicism of the *B Flat Sextet*, Brahms, in the *Quartet in G Minor, Op. 25*, for piano and strings, once more bathed in the warm romantic sunshine of the Schumann influence, changing over in the last movement to the fiery romance of Hungary, whose folk music he loved so dearly and used so often. Composed in 1859, it received a hearty reception. In it, Brahms simply overflowed with fire, energy and abundance of ideas, though in form it is relatively simple. The *Quartet* is a most grateful vehicle for its performers, the piano part being very rich. It is a source of temptation to one who finds difficulty in keeping his playing within bounds. There are few greater moments than the thrilling climax of the Andante, and the flashing brilliance of the finale is irresistible. The Victor recording by Rubinstein and the Pro Arte is excellent. Balance between piano and strings is uniformly maintained, and the playing is charged with the gusto appropriate to the music; these discs can be highly recommended.

The *Quartet in A Major, Op. 26*, for the same combination of the instruments, was written two years later. While similar in spirit to Op. 25, it shows the composer in a vein slightly more subdued than that of the companion work. The first two movements are somewhat more inspired than the following parts, and in the Poco Adagio, new emotional heights are attained. The muted strings and piano give forth a haunting melody of lyrical beauty. Here is music of imagination and power, presented with an economy of means. The Hungarian finale is more reticent than that of the *G Minor*. This masterly composition has received a fine performance by Rudolf Serkin and members of the Busch Quartet in Victor's recording, the only one in existence. Made at the same time as the Op. 25, it shares its fine qualities and a special word must be said for Serkin's outstanding contribution.

If the *Quintet in F Minor, Op. 34*, for piano and strings, presents to the listener a slightly greater problem than do the preceding works, it seems to have done the very same thing for Brahms himself. The wealth of symphonic ideas baffled him so that he could not make up his mind about the proper expression for such orchestral sonorities. He began by writing the work for string quintet with second cello. Finding this medium inadequate, he embodied his themes in a sonata for two pianos, Op. 34a, often heard in recitals for this combination. Coming to the conclusion that the essentially symphonic character of the music demanded different treatment, he finally combined the lyric qualities of the strings with the marked rhythm and incisive speech of the piano, producing a heaven-storming masterpiece of rugged vitality and passion, carrying him to a point where he could go no further with the means at hand. It will be seen that henceforth Brahms became quieter in his expression and more austere in style. The mood of the *Quintet* is impressively announced by the bold unison passage which opens it, given by violin, cello and piano. Neither of the two older recordings is satisfactory. Victor's, with Bauer and the Flonzaley Quartet, dates back to the very beginnings of electrical recording and has little to recommend it. Columbia's, with the Leners and Olga Loeser-Lebert, made in 1927, is a vast improvement in recording and performance. A new version of this work, played by the Busch Quartet and Rudolf Serkin, was recently released in England. It is to be hoped that this will be brought forward here at an early date.

It is apparent, on examining the *String Sextet in G Major, Op. 36*, finished in 1866, that Brahms had to a great extent thrown off the youthful energy and high spirits of his earlier compositions, and we also note the result of continued studies in counterpoint, together with the deeper feeling permeating this and his later chamber works. This *Sextet* is a lofty creation and while not so generally attractive, at a single hearing, as the *B Flat Sextet*, it grows on one, with its first movement like the breath of nature and the Poco Adagio with its profundity and spirituality bringing us face to face with the truth that here indeed Brahms is close kin to the Beethoven of the later quartets. Two recordings have been made; the old N.G.S. set by the Spencer Dyke ensemble was far below present day standards; the recent Victor set by the Budapest Quartet with Pini and Hobday is

good, though there are spots where the playing does not hold together and even the recording falls below the highest level.

The *Sonata in E Minor, Op. 38*, for cello and piano, is the first of the seven for piano and solo instruments and may be said to mark the beginning of a second period in the development of Brahms. Writing for this combination doubtless confronted him with innumerable problems and to his credit, he adopted a style which did much to overcome most of them. The cello does not make the best possible companion for the piano. In louder passages, it is under a severe handicap, lacking the volume and piercing quality to compete with the clanging sonorities of its partner. This is especially true of the cello's lower register. Brahms did not make it easier in writing the entire cello part very low. Nevertheless, extended hearing reveals the sonata as a rich, dark-hued work in a lyric vein, full of ingratiating melodies. Columbia has given us a fine recording by Emanuel Feuermann and Theo. van der Pas. It could have been better were the piano part more in focus. I seem to recall the release several years ago, in Continental Europe, of an H.M.V. set by Piatigorsky and Rubinstein, but have read no reviews concerning it.

To appreciate Brahms' complete understanding of the various instruments, one need look no further than the *Trio in E Flat, Op. 40*, for violin, horn and piano. The cumbersome of the horn and its almost complete lack of agility explain why it figures so seldom in music of an intimate nature. Brahms, however, who played the instrument in his youth, wrote with expert sureness this trio, a work of woodland beauty and charm, inspired by his stay in the Black Forest at Baden-Baden in 1865. It is sometimes played with a cello substituting for the horn, but so felicitously did Brahms write for the latter that the cello merely seems to be guilty of trespassing. The first movement is a charming dialogue between violin and horn against the background of the piano. The bold speech and rhythm of the second movement, a scherzo, always reminds me of the similar section of the *E Minor Symphony*. The finale evokes echoes of an exciting hunt. The Victor recording by Busch, Brain and Serkin is outstanding in every respect. These artists simply surpass themselves and the sound engineers successfully surmounted any difficulties imposed by the unusual combination of instruments.

It might be a source of wonder that with so great a wealth of ideas to infuse into his chamber music, Brahms avoided the medium

of the string quartet for as long as he did. That he destroyed about twenty early efforts in this form only emphasizes the seriousness with which he undertook his task. He realized that string-quartet writing demands greater concentration, a more subtle and sensitive approach. It is exacting to a degree and its texture too uncomfortably exposed to permit of mere youthful romanticism and exuberance. The three superb quartets of Brahms testify to his artistic integrity. The first two appeared in 1873; the other, two years later.

Though from the technical standpoint all three are equally filled with the composer's genius, when played they "sound" differently. The first, in *C Minor, Op. 51, No. 1*, is a unique work of dramatic strength, austere in its beauty and simplicity, weakest perhaps in its finale. The second, in *A Minor, Op. 51, No. 2*, is the most popular; this is readily understandable because of its genial warmth and sentiment. It is perfectly balanced throughout and in spirit a direct contrast to the *C Minor* — truly one of Brahms' noblest creations. The *Quartet in B Flat, Op. 67*, possesses an individual charm, suggesting the elements of humor, a quality easily misunderstood and unappreciated. The slow movement has a rarely beautiful melody. The third, with its viola solo set against the other three instruments muted, has an original touch. Equally felicitous is the finale, a fine set of variations on an attractive folk-like tune.

The *C Minor Quartet* was recorded for Victor by the Busch Quartet; for Columbia by the Leners. Tonally, both are satisfactory. They differ in interpretation, the Leners lending a warmer quality to their playing. The Busch perform with a rather uncompromising austerity which, in view of the music's underlying character, may be more in keeping. The *A Minor* is obtainable in versions by the Leners (Columbia) and the Budapest (Victor). The latter, of more recent date, is slightly better in balance, though the Columbia set is excellent. In point of performance, the Budapest ensemble do creditably, lacking, however, the fire and energy of the Leners. This difference is most apparent in the first movement. The Polydor set by the Buxbaum Quartet is too old for serious consideration, nor was this organization of as high an order as the other two. The Lener and Budapest combinations also are concerned with the *B Flat Quartet*. Judged by present-day standards, the recording of both can stand improvement. The performances vary somewhat and my personal preference is the Leners'.

Although it was not until 1875 that the *Quartet in C Minor*, Op. 60, for piano and strings, was published, Brahms had kept it at his side for about twenty years, making frequent revisions. It has never attained the popularity of the two earlier piano quartets, but is admired by musicians for its fine structure and balance. Its most attractive movement is the songful Andante, the cello indulging in a lengthy melody of entrancing beauty. The single recording is Columbia's, made by Towbin, Dawson and Stern, with Harry Cumpson at the piano. Recording is good but unfortunately the playing is almost entirely without distinction, badly lacking in rhythmic definition. A more inspired reading is needed.

In view of Brahms' close intimacy with Joachim, it appears strange that he failed to produce a violin sonata until 1879. As a matter of fact, he did write four which did not meet his own critical standards and which he consigned to oblivion. He was groping for a new technique in this field, having decided that the orchestral conception of the piano in his earlier chamber compositions was too heavy to serve as the background for the lyrical speech of the violin. That his efforts in the direction of a satisfactory medium for the expression of his ideas found fruit is amply evidenced by the first of his three violin sonatas, *G Major*, Op. 78, which may be said to mark the beginning of a new peak in the Master's chamber music. It is perfect in construction, even throughout in its musical inspiration and full of lovely melodies, among the loveliest of which is the opening one in the first movement. In spite of frequent performance, it never loses its hold on the affections of music lovers — another of the supreme inspirations of Brahms. Its success came with its first hearing and won over the diehards who professed to find nothing of warmth and graciousness in him. Two recordings are available: Busch and Serkin for Victor, Seidel and Loesser for Columbia. The former is superior from every standpoint, a fine realization of the music's content. While satisfying as a recording, it is about six years old and an up-to-date version would not be out of place.

Next in line is the *Trio in C Major*, Op. 87, for violin, cello and piano, which deserves greater popularity than it has achieved, for it is a work of finely knit texture and reaches a high point in musical inventiveness. Its beginning is direct, bereft of any hint of discursiveness. The Andante con moto is a masterly set of variations on a highly original theme. A Scherzo and spirited Finale bring

to a close this interesting Trio. In the matter of recordings, gramophiles have not been served to complete satisfaction, by any means. The Polydor-Brunswick set is too old. The Columbia, while enlisting such artists as Hess, d'Aranyi and Cassado, failed to make use of its opportunity by recording with poor balance and generally dull tone.

Despite my great affection for it and all efforts to hear it as often as possible, the *Quintet in F Major*, Op. 88, for strings with second viola, is so seldom performed that I can recall only about three performances heard by me. For that reason, the new Victor recording is more than welcome. Technically, the *Quintet* is on a par with the finest of Brahms' chamber music and it is also most attractive to the ear. The finale is fugal almost throughout, resembling in that respect the *E Minor Cello Sonata*. It breathes joy and excitement in every bar. Happily, the recorded performance by the Budapest ensemble meets the highest critical standards.

The *Sonata in F Major*, Op. 99, for cello and piano, was composed in 1886 during Brahms' stay in Switzerland. First presented in Vienna by the renowned Hausmann with the composer at the piano, its reception was not wholeheartedly cordial. We of today, who have a greater knowledge and appreciation of Brahms, can more quickly recognize the grandeur of this superb sonata, a great advance over his earlier effort in this form. Written in a generally higher register than the experimental *E Minor*, it is more sonorous in tone, concise in structure and clear in expression. Nothing could throw better light on its qualities than the magisterial performance of Casals, with the able collaboration of Mieczyslaw Horszowski, as recorded for Victor.

The cello sonata was not the only fruit of Brahms' stay at Thun in 1886, for during that summer he also composed his violin *Sonata in A Major*, Op. 100, and the *C Minor Piano-forte Trio*, Op. 101. Ever since my first hearing of it, I have had a great affection for the violin sonata, which bears a close resemblance to the *G Major* in its quiet, gentle pathos. It is rich in lovely tunes and generally maintains its mood throughout. The Columbia set of Seidel and Loesser, a dozen years old, can hardly be considered, but Victor offers two versions, one by Spalding and Benoit, the other by Busch and Serkin. Both are well recorded but I prefer the latter by reason of its better knit performance and greater fidelity to the spirit of the composer.

It requires no more than the first few bars of the *Trio in C Minor*, Op. 101, to reveal

that here Brahms approaches the exalted heights of that other monumental masterpiece in the same key, the *First Symphony*. The defiant opening movement has an unabating intensity and conciseness. The Presto non assai, which follows, uses muted strings and projects a feeling of dark mystery. The Andante Grazioso is music of a sunny nature, the Finale effectively brilliant. The sole existing recording is the Decca, played by the Budapest Trio (not to be confused with the Budapest Quartet, a finer ensemble by far). It is slightly cut, but in spite of some muddy patches, it is a generally good set. I believe the Pirani Trio, in the old N.G.S. set, gave a better performance.

The *Sonata in D Minor*, Op. 108, for violin and piano, dedicated to Hans von Bülow, is representative of Brahms' complete mastery, a work of greater depth and power than the earlier sonatas for this combination and offering much greater technical problems for its performers. It also calls for highly developed dramatic expression on the part of both and any performance falling short of the loftiest standards cannot do justice to this magnificent composition. The first movement's development section probably has never been surpassed by Brahms and seldom has he given us so beautiful a slow movement, so benign and serene. The third is elfin-like in mood, the fourth triumphant in its glorious sweep. There are four recordings. I never heard the H.M.V. version of Menges and Samuel. The old withdrawn Columbia set by Zimbalist and Kaufman was marred by overamplification of the violin and a corresponding reticence of the piano part. Victor's set by Kochanski and Rubinstein is highly satisfying but surpassed by Columbia's second recording, done by those sterling artists, Szigeti and Petri. The virtues of the latter have been the subject of extensive comment by critics and reviewers. Suffice it to say that the recording is outstanding and the performance one which could not have failed to delight the Master himself. It is surpassing in technical finish and rarely indeed is this music played by two such supreme performers, whose artistry is so completely at the service of the composer. The gramophone has been considerably enriched by these discs and it is an enticing thought that the future may bring us Szigeti and Petri in recordings of the earlier sonatas.

Brahms' last work for strings alone was the *Quintet in G Major*, Op. 111, with second viola. The remainder of the immortal twenty-four he devoted to his new-conceived enthusiasm for the clarinet, and inevitably much of it was experimental and slightly below his

highest level of accomplishment. The viola quintet, however, is Brahms at the height of his powers. It is solid music, written with expert sureness. The arresting opening, with its defiant, upward surging motive in the cello against the tremolando of the other four instruments, creates an atmosphere which is never dissipated. The work is indeed heroic, one of the most vital of the entire list. The Victor recording by the Budapest Quartet with Hans Mahlke, second viola, was made over five years ago but is well up to present-day standards. Performance is excellent.

After completion of the *Quintet*, Brahms' health slowly began to fail and he was disinclined to follow it up with further writing in this vein. However, some years before he had become intimately acquainted with Richard Mühlfeld, clarinetist of the Meininger Orchestra, whose virtuosity and musicianship he greatly admired. After lengthy study of the possibilities of the clarinet as a factor in chamber music, Brahms decided to compose for it. Of all wind instruments, the clarinet, with its three separate registers, has the widest range of expression, tone color and flexibility. Its ability to blend well with both strings and piano appealed strongly to Brahms.

His initial effort, the *Trio in A Minor*, Op. 114, for clarinet, cello and piano, composed in 1891 and first performed by Mühlfeld, Hausmann and Brahms, naturally falls into the category of experiments and while the tone color of the clarinet is well used to sustain the serious mood of the music, it must be admitted that this *Trio* is the weakest of the clarinet works and one of the least inspired of the entire chamber music output; it has not attained any great measure of popularity. The performance for Musicraft by McLane, Hunkins and Kaye is a competent one and recording is good.

It is characteristic of Brahms that he so quickly passed from the experimental stage of the *Trio* to the sure grasp of his new medium manifest in the *Quintet in B Minor*, Op. 115, for clarinet and strings. His inspiration was not dampened as in the earlier work and the *Quintet* can without reservation be placed in the front rank of his finest creations. In expression it is unique and reacts upon the listener as no other work can. Few can fail to be affected by its poignant opening movement and the plaintive Adagio with its rhapsodic speech in the clarinet, bringing to mind the Hungarian gypsy violinist's florid projection of the melody against the humming background of the accompaniment. The third movement, while less outstanding, has

charm. The finale, *Con Moto*, embodies a theme and five variations. Towards the end, the mood undergoes a change, giving a sense of pathos which is heightened by the cyclic return to the opening theme of the first movement. The last heartrending bars impart, at least to me, a wrenching pain as on the final departure of a loved one. From the standpoint of performance, the Columbia set by Draper and the Lener Quartet is almost perfect. The recording, while below today's standards, is good. The new Victor set is played by Reginald Kell and the Busch Quartet. This is indeed a fine set of discs understandingly played, though Kell has not displaced Draper in my mind as the finest clarinetist I have heard on or off records.

The sonatas for clarinet and piano, *Op. 120, No. 1 in F Minor* and *Op. 120, No. 2 in E Flat Major*, composed in the summer of 1894 and first heard in Vienna the following winter, bring to a conclusion the chamber music of Brahms. There is no denying they are pleasant works, displaying the composer's craftsmanship to a high degree and if below the level of the *Clarinet Quintet* and others of his earlier products, it must be remembered that combined with the piano, it is the clarinet itself which is apt to impose certain limitations upon the composer. This is apparent upon examining the rather episodic treatment of the first movement of the *F Minor* and comparing it with the development of the opening movement in the *D Minor Violin Sonata*. Nevertheless, while realizing that the clarinet cannot compete with the violin in its particular field, Brahms exploits its possibilities to the fullest and throughout both works one encounters many endearing touches. The *Andante Con Moto* of the *E Flat Sonata* is a case in point. It is a theme and five variations, giving a first impression of bare simplicity but actually being charged with a high degree of subtlety.

Brahms provided versions of these two sonatas for viola and piano, and in that form the music is frequently heard. It is in the viola arrangement that Columbia gave us the *F Minor*, played by Lionel Tertis and Harriet Cohen. It is a fine performance but as recorded, Tertis' tone is constricted and oboe-like in character. It is to be hoped that a clarinet recording will receive the attention of one of the recording companies in the near future.* Decca has provided an authentic version of the *E Flat*, by Frederick

*Since this article was written, Musicraft has issued a recording of this sonata as performed by David Weber, clarinet, and Ray Lev, piano. This set was reviewed in the February issue.—Editor.

Thurston and Myers Foggin. Thurston's clarinet has been featured in a number of excellent chamber music recordings and with Foggin he gives a worthy performance of this sonata, well recorded. Victor recently released a splendid set of discs in the viola arrangement, the artists being the renowned virtuoso, William Primrose, with Gerald Moore the capable pianist. Nothing might seem further apart than the cumbersome string instrument and the clarinet with its flexibility, extensive range and variations in tone color, but Primrose, through sheer artistry, never permits the listener to dwell upon anything but the music itself, so successful is he in overcoming all difficulties. Recording is nothing short of magnificent and these records in all respects bear comparison with the Casals set of the *F Major Cello Sonata*.

The chamber music of Brahms has been popular for years, but in the concert halls only the string quartets and violin sonatas are given with regularity. Next in order come the piano trios and the piano quintet. Such works as the clarinet sonatas, trio and quintet together with the string quintets and sextets, seldom are heard except in complete series devoted to all of the twenty-four. The gramophone who is an admirer of Brahms is not in the least handicapped, because at long last he is enabled, through the medium of recordings, to hear all of these rewarding pieces at will.

Three Books

THE KINGDOM OF SWING by Benny Goodman and Irving G. Kolodin. 265 pp. Stackpole Sons, New York. \$2.00.

■ A book like this was bound to come sooner or later. A man who has consistently held the title of "King of Swing" (and is only now being displaced in the public favor) during the very height of swing's popularity is practically compelled by his public to tell something about himself and his opinions. For a man who is just now turning thirty, it may seem a bit presumptuous of him to write an autobiography. It leads one to suspect uncomplimentary things about the relative size of his head. It is altogether to Benny Goodman's credit that he acquits himself of this difficult task so modestly.

This book is an autobiography only in a limited sense. Goodman uses the theme of his life as a framework on which to build a history of jazz and jazz musicians, a perfectly legitimate plan because Goodman was born

close enough to the period when jazz began, to be considered, if not one of its originators, at least one of its prophets. Of course there is plenty about Benny Goodman, his family, and their private affairs, but there is much more about the jazz musicians he knew, worked with, and grew up with. And this is more important for it gives a clear picture of jazz in its infancy and the men who helped to bring it to maturity.

Benny Goodman makes no pretense at writing a literary masterpiece. In fact, the entire book is written in a simple, conversational style, thoroughly American, in character. And I mean American, not English. A quotation or two may illustrate this: "The boys that hung out at the Three Deuces were terrifically talented guys, but most of them didn't read, and we thought their playing was rough — we didn't pay them much mind, although we liked to jam with them." (Page 74). "None of us had much use for what was known then and probably always will be, as 'commercial' musicians. If a fellow happened to be a good legitimate trumpet man or a swell straight clarinet player, he might get credit for being a fine musician who could read a part upside down at sight, but we didn't pay much attention to them. The saddest thing, always, was a recognized hot man who went in for that sort of work because he made good dough and got steady work around the studios. But whenever you met him you could tell that the work bored the pants off him, and I have seen more than a few fellows crack up for this one reason." (Page 101). This book will be a hard nut to crack for translators — for this book is sure to be well circulated in Europe, where Goodman has as many followers as he has here.

Before this book appeared, there was much talk of "ghosting" by Irving Kolodin. A single reading will convince anyone that this is not so. Benny Goodman's manner of talking is now quite familiar to his fans through his radio broadcasts. The book reads just as he speaks. Kolodin's contribution to the book seems to be limited to a foreword and two chapters which he devotes entirely to a discussion of jazz as music.

The book has several good illustrations which look new and there is one that is a honey: a composite of Benny and Leopold Stokowski labeled "From Bach to Swing" — Stokowski and Goodman." Stokowski looks just too, too divine! That surely can't be blamed on Bach or swing!

A truly interesting book, well worth reading.
—E. A.

BEETHOVEN, by Walter Riezler. 312 pp.
New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1939. \$3.

■ This is not just another book on Beethoven. Riezler devotes a part of his volume to a brief account of the master's life, but it was not his purpose to write a biography. His thesis is that Beethoven was a composer who thought practically exclusively in terms of absolute music. This idea is presented and developed in a section called "Beethoven and Absolute Music" and governs the subsequent analyses of the principal works. The non-biographical part of the book is marked by much sound thinking and there is a minimum of rhapsodizing. The analyses are rather technical and usually require comparison with the score. They repay careful study because they are always sensible and often reveal flashes of deep insight. Most of them are necessarily short but the appendix contains, as an example of the type of approach necessary for a complete understanding of the workings of Beethoven's mind, a measure for measure study of the first movement of the *Eroica Symphony*. The book is furnished with a glossary of musical terms that should be found helpful by the lay reader, a chronological list of the important works, a selected bibliography, and an index.

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MUSIC AND THE LISTENER. By Harry Allen Feldman. 205 pp. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York. \$2.00.

■ To the layman who seeks guidance in the understanding and development of appreciation of the best music this book, like a great many others, is addressed. It was written by a teacher in one of the high schools of New York City. The author explains the styles in composition from Bach down to the present day, summing up each of the various periods in the evolution of music in a chapter. In his desire to clarify specific points the author has, it seems to us, "written down" to his readers and resorted to what appear to be some fatal generalizations. We did not find the book easy or especially interesting reading. It might be well for the prospective purchaser to skim over its pages before acquiring it. This suggestion is prompted by the fact that one of our readers wrote us that she regarded it as one of the best books on music that she had ever read, while another reader told us he thought it extremely dull. Unquestionably Mr. Feldman has his audience; we are sorry to say that we are not in it.

GRAMOPHONIANA



I- SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF FRANK C. STANLEY

ULYSSES WALSH

WHEN FRANK C. STANLEY, BORN FRANK Stanley Grinstead, died in December 10, 1910, almost exactly 42 years from the date of his birth, his records were big sellers in nearly every English-speaking country, just as those of the Australian basso, Peter Dawson, are today. Stanley might, in fact, be called the Dawson of his day except that his records — particularly his Edison and Columbia cylinders — probably had an even more widespread vogue than Dawson's. Peter's records have never been good sellers in the United States, but Stanley's robust interpretations of patriotic numbers, hymns, standard ballads, popular songs and even comic skits and dialect specialties went everywhere.

Some interesting information concerning this now almost-forgotten singer may be obtained from back copies of that pioneer English gramophone journal, *The Talking Machine News*. The following biographical sketch, for instance, published in a 1907 issue, is worth quoting. It shows that the T. M. N.'s staff biographer could present much meaty matter in a concise, if not too graceful style:

FRANK C. STANLEY, AMERICAN BARITONE

Christmas, 1868, at Orange, New Jersey, marked most auspiciously the birth of a gifted baritone singer (*Stanley was really a basso*) now widely known to fame as Frank C. Stanley, whose home for ten years was located in the Orange depot of the Lackawanna Railroad, of which his father was a prominent official. Here the lad was brought into daily intercourse with the quaint original village characters, many of whom are amusingly featured in his clever series of thirteen "rube" dialogues and duets, which he successfully recorded with the well-known tenor, Byron G. Harlan.

It is interesting to know that these characters and names actually existed in Morris county, New Jersey, and the record series just mentioned therefore embodies true-to-life reflections of human nature exactly as found in the rural neighborhoods where the scenes are laid. Frank's youthful accomplishments were unmistakably displayed in the Orange high school, from which he graduated with high honors, his valedictory essay dwelling upon "The Power of

Music", while his superior knowledge of the subject was practically established upon the banjo in 1889 at Newark, New Jersey, by his winning the amateur championship of the state, which title he successfully defended against all comers.

He first found employment in the Orange post-office, then in a coal and lumber yard, subsequently becoming teller of the Orange bank, where he frequently handled vouchers representing the large amounts earned by talent engaged in the art of record making. Not long after, in '98, Frank Stanley's baritone was perhaps the most highly prized of all artists then engaged in the ranks of those singing to the talking machine. Through this means Mr. Stanley's work speedily became world famous, especially by his ringing versions of the favorite national airs of England and America, in which he particularly excels, giving these grand songs a natural patriotic interpretation that is rarely equalled, as may also be said of his splendid sacred numbers, fervid in their intensity as they are eloquent in their appeal to true religious sentiment. It is a noteworthy coincidence that Frank C. Stanley is a recognized pseudonym for the leading sacred soloist in one of New York's foremost Fifth Avenue churches.

Frank C. Stanley is famous throughout the north and middle west of America by reason of his frequent successful tours in those vicinities, equally as much for his gramophone records which, considered from every standpoint — tone, volume, execution and delivery — are well-nigh perfect. Mr. Stanley's solos are rich, ringing and resonant. His vocal duets with Miss Corinne Morgan, as with Miss Alice Stevenson (both contraltos) are always clear, distinct and irresistible. Their success is largely due to Mr. Stanley's own arrangement of them specially for the talking machine, bringing into relief the contrast between the contralto and the baritone in a manner which is unrivalled. The same charm pervades his magnificent duets with Mr. Henry Burr, the well-known tenor. Mr. Stanley organized and still conducts the Invincible Male Vocal Quartet, the Lotus Glee Club, the Mendelssohn Mixed Quartet (which is Mr. Stanley's own organization) and the Metropolitan Trio, the personnel of which are directly under his own supervision.

There we have a contemporary, if not altogether accurate, estimate of Mr. Stanley's work. While it cannot be denied that the T. M. N. writer was lavish with his superlatives, any one who today makes a critical examination of this singer's ancient records will be obliged to admit the critic hardly overshot his mark.

Any veteran talking machine man will tell you Stanley Grinstead was an artist of remarkable personality. Certainly a vocalist who not only made successful concert appearances, singing serious music, but was also gifted as a delineator of rustic humor, in addition to being the organizer and manager of several noteworthy singing organizations, must have been a man of no mean ability. Nor must we forget that he was in his day the champion banjoist of New Jersey! I fear, however, that posterity is the loser for the absence of an example of his banjo playing. The late Vess L. Ossman, "the Banjo King", had virtually a monopoly of plinkety-plank-plunk work in those dear long-gone days.

I consider the crowning achievement of Stanley's career to have been organizing and perfecting the Peerless Quartet. The English magazine referred to an Invincible Quartet, and I have seen one or two very old Columbia records sung by that organization, which I take to have been the forerunner of the Peerless. The latter used the name, Columbia Quartet, when working for the Columbia Company, until 1913, some time after Stanley's death. It always called itself the Peerless when singing for other manufacturers. At any rate, this remarkable male voice ensemble, which came into existence about 1905, was one of the finest in the entire history of the phonograph. Its popularity endured until it disbanded in 1929.

Naturally the personnel changed with the years. In the beginning the Peerless was composed of four accomplished soloists, notables in their own right, who undoubtedly belong in any list of the twenty or so greatest "popular" artists in the annals of the talking machine business.

And here I would like to say that one of the fallacies common among people who discuss the early days of recording is the belief that the singers of that day were; with the exception of highly-touted opera stars, a musically illiterate lot, selected because their strident voices were capable of tearing crude impressions into the stubborn wax. This is utterly untrue. Many of the group, like the members of the Peerless, had vocal equipment good enough for opera or anything else, but for one cause or another — perhaps from possession of an overweening sense of humor — found themselves doing light and inconsequential things instead of singing in opera.

However, to return to the quartet, Stanley himself was bass, and invariably insisted on doing all the solo work, instead of being conventional and leaving that duty to the second

tenor. Albert Campbell, a veteran still active in his profession, and a singer gifted with an ethereally sweet high voice, was first tenor. Second tenor (and manager of the quartet after Stanley's death) was Henry Burr, the most popular ballad singer in the history of the phonograph. Burr served a few years ago as musical director of the Columbia Broadcasting Company and is now heard each Saturday night, singing on the National Barn Dance program. The baritone was the late Arthur Collins, best known as a sterling comedian and then distinguished as a singer of "coon" songs of the "Preacher and the Bear" type. He had enjoyed much experience in light opera.

Following Stanley's death, John Meyers became the bass. No other change was made for nine years, after which Collins was replaced by the famous concert singer, Frank Croxton. (This gave the quartet two basses but no baritone!) Meyers and Croxton are both still active. The foursome of Campbell, Burr, Meyers and Croxton remained intact until 1925, when the personnel was so radically changed that only Burr remained. Carl Mathieu became first tenor, Stanley Baughman, baritone and James Stanley, bass. They continued as members until the quartet disbanded. All are still living, but Stanley (no relation of course to Frank C. Stanley, whose last name really wasn't Stanley at all) was obliged to have an operation performed on his vocal chords which will prevent his ever singing again.

But that is anticipating. Reverting to the quartet's founder, the February, 1911, issue of the *Talking Machine News* appeared with an article, bordered in black, chronicling the singer's passing. The Victor company's monthly supplement for that month also announced sadly that the genial basso was dead. At that time he was not only the head of the Peerless but was also a member of Victor's Lyric Quartet, then composed of Elise Stevenson, Corinne Morgan*, Harry Macdonough and Stanley; led the Metropolitan Trio, composed of Burr, Stanley and Miss Stevenson, who really was a soprano instead of a contralto and who used the name of Elise instead of Alice, as given by the *Talking Machine News*; sang in Victor's Trinity Choir, and was active in various other vocal organizations.

A year after Stanley's death, in December, 1911, Victor announced a Peerless Quartet record of *In the Golden Afterwhile*. A note explained that "this beautiful ballad was written by the late Stanley Grinstead (Frank C. Stanley) and the royalties are being paid to his widow and two children. Everyone

should buy this record and thereby perform both a duty and a pleasure." A slightly shortened version of that rather touching paragraph continued to appear in the yearly Victor catalogues until the record was cut out in 1920. Fellow recording artists also gave a concert for the benefit of Stanley's family.

*One of the minor mysteries of phonograph history is the question of what became of the Misses Morgan and Stevenson after the death of their associate and preceptor. Miss Stevenson, who was really a Mrs. Woods, was understood to be in poor health. She sang a few duets with Henry Burr but soon ceased to appear in record lists, while Miss Morgan seems to have disappeared completely after Stanley's demise. To many collectors she has become the "mystery woman" of records and unsuccessful efforts have been made to ascertain whether she is still alive. Whether she is or not, her records are yearly becoming of more interest and may before long rank in collectors' interest with those by some of the Red Seal divas. She was a New York choir singer years ago and her real name was Corinne Welsh. Both she and Miss Stevenson were charming singers and are, I hope, still living, well and happy.

OVERTONES

EUROPEAN RECORD RELEASES

England

- AUBER: *Overture - Fra Diavolo*; Lambert and London Phil. Orch. HMV — C-3084.
- BACH: *Passacaglia in C mi.; Chorale Prelude — Herzlich tut mich verlangen*; Fritz Heitmann. Telefunken E2681-2.
- BACH-PICK-MANGIACALLI: *Two Preludes*; Ferrero and E. I. A. R. Orch. Parlophone E11398.
- BACH, W. F.: *Sym. in D minor*; Chamber Orch. of Berlin Phil. Orch. Telefunken E2599.
- BEETHOVEN: *Trio in G maj., Op. 9, No. 1*; Pasquier Trio. Columbia DX909-11.
- BLISS: *Sonata for viola and piano*; Forbes and Foggin. Decca X233-5.
- BUSONI: *Elegie, No. 2, All'Italia, and Albumblatt No. 3*; Egon Petri. Col. LX792.
- CHOPIN: *Waltz in C sh. mi., Op. 64*; and *Nocturne in F sh., Op. 15*; Paderewski. HMV DB3711.
- DEBUSSY: *Twelve Etudes (Dedicated to the Memory of Chopin)*; Adolph Hallis. Eng. Decca K-891-6.
- DELIUS: *Two Aquarelles - Air and Dance*; Boyd Neel String Orch. Eng. Decca X147.
- LISZT: *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*. Decca LY6127. *Hungarian Rhapsodies Nos. 3 and 7*. Decca LY6128. *Hungarian Rhapsodies Nos. 4, 5, and 6*. Decca PO5123-5. Played by Borovsky.
- LISZT: *O quand je dors*; and WAGNER: *Schlaf ein, mein kind*; Elis. Schumann. HMV — DB3654.
- MOZART: *Violin Concerto in D major, K. 218*, Fritz Kreisler with Orchestra, direction Sargent. HMV — DB3734-6.
- MOZART: *Linz Symphony, No. 36 in C*; Beecham and London Phil. Orch. Columbia LX797-9.
- MOZART: *Rondo in D, K. 485*; and LISZT: *Waldesrauchen*; Louis Kentner. Columbia DX908.
- PAGANINI: *Brilliant Variations for the G string*; Barylli and Graef. Decca-Polydor PO5127.
- PUCCINI: *Turandot (Complete Opera)*; performed by Gina Cigna (Turandot), Francesco Merli (Il Principe), Magda Olivero (Liu), Luciano Neroni (Tirmur), Armando Giannotti (Altoum), G. Bravura (Mandarin), Alfro Poli, A. Zangonara, G. del Signore (Ping, Pang, Pong). E. I. A. R. Chorus and Symphony Orchestra, with Franco Ghione, conductor. Parlophone R-20410-25.
- RAVEL: *Alborado del Gracioso*; Walter Gieseking. Columbia LB53.
- SCHUBERT: *Impromptu in E flat, Op. 90*; and *Andante in A*; Eileen Joyce. Parlophone E11403.
- STRAUSS: *Overture - The Gypsy Baron*; Walter and London Sym. Orch. HMV — DB3650.
- TSCHAIKOWSKY: *Sym. No. 5 in E mi.*; Lambert and London Phil. Orch. HMV — C3088-92.
- TSCHAIKOWSKY: *The Sleeping Princess — Ballet Music*; Lambert and Sadlers' Wells Orch. HMV — C-3081-3.
- WAGNER: *Siegfried Idyll*; Weingartner and London Phil. Orch. Col. LX801-2.

France

- RAMEAU: *Minuets from Les Paladins*. Oiseau-Lyre 71a. COUPERIN: *Two Musettes and La Crouilli ou la Couperinete*. OL 56. Chamber Orch. dir. R. Desormié.
- THIRTEEN FRENCH FOLK SONGS (with old instrument accompaniments); *Le Pauvre*, *Etameur*, *Le Chevier dans la Montagne*, *Chanson de Labour*, *Chanson de la Laine*, *Lou Bouié*, *Chanson de l'Aveine*, *Le Ré-moulier*, *Les Tilloliers*, *Le Marins de Groix*, *Margaidette se regard*, *Plantons la Vigne*, *Les Tisserands*, *Scions de la Plancha*. Sung by M. Singher and Mlle. Mahé. Florilège 101-6.

Germany

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 4*; Mengelberg and Concertgebouw Orch. Telefunken.

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet in G major, Op. 18, No. 2*; Budapest String Quartet. HMV - DB3631-32.

RESPIGHI: *Brazilian Impressions*; Oswald Kabasta and Munich Philharmonic Orch. HMV - DB4643-44.

STRAUSS: *Don Juan*; Mengelberg and Concertgebouw Orch. Telefunken.

Toscanini, during the early part of the week of April 17, prior to his sailing for Europe on the 21st, is said to have recorded another Beethoven symphony for RCA-Victor. Rumor has it that it was the *Third*, *Fourth* or *Eighth*, any one of which, we feel certain, music lovers would be glad to have in the maestro's compelling interpretation.

Up Boston way, we understand Koussevitzky and his famous orchestra have been busy making a number of interesting recordings, among which, we hear, were Debussy's *La Mer* and Prokofieff's *Peter and the Wolf*, and with Heifetz as soloist, the Brahms *Violin Concerto*.

It is also rumored that Marjorie Lawrence and Lauritz Melchior were recently in Philadelphia, singing behind closed doors with Mr. Ormandy and the celebrated Quaker City orchestra. Looks like it might have been a recording session, and we suspect Mr. Wagner's music was being performed.

Frank Sheridan, the American pianist who has made an outstanding name for himself in the concert hall, is rumored to have signed a contract with domestic Columbia. If this concern aims to sign up a group of American artists, we feel certain it will be supported by public opinion. The neglect of a great number of American artists by the recording companies has long been a subject of complaint on the part of many of our readers.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor.

Among the many useful features of your discriminating journal were the winning lists in the Chamber Music Contest published in the February number. It has helped enrich my record library considerably.

RUTH WALLIS.

Minneapolis, Minn.

Modern Music

To The American Music Lover.

I am one of the few whose musical appreciation began with Stravinsky's "Firebird Suite," and although I enjoy Bach, Mozart and Beethoven, I buy

Sibelius, Bartok and Delius. Radio supplies me with most of the former — thank Heaven! But the phonograph supplies me with the latter — but not enough! I make a plea for recordings of the following:

BARTOK: 2nd Piano Concerto or one of his Violin Sonatas.

BAX: One of the Symphonies.

BLOCH: Israel Symphony; Voice in the Wilderness - I've given up Schelomo. (So have I—Ed.)

VAN DIEREN: One of his String Quartets or some other work.

SCHOENBERG: Pierrot Lunaire; one of the Quartets.

That's a long list, but they are all important works; maybe the list might bring some results if you publish it.

HENRY YOHANEN.

Gary, Indiana.

Schubert's Quintet

To the Editor.

Mr. Gerstlé is right. The Columbia recording of Schubert's "Quintet in C major" is a better performance than the Victor. Incidentally, I thought, as everybody else seems to have done, that the Columbia performance was by the Lener String Quartet, etc., but glancing at the labels I noticed to my surprise it was by the London String Quartet. Those were the days when the Londoners were in top form. Alas, this fine quartet has gone the way of the Flonzaleys! A recent rehearing of the Columbia set shows that it reproduces very well indeed, considering the period of recording.

GLENN WILLIAMS.

Dallas, Texas.

Modern Music Again

To the Editor.

I had a letter recently from a Chicago reader which may interest those who entered your chamber music contest. In part it read:

"Your laurel was well won, though there should have been more quarrelling about the inclusion of so many museum-pieces of musical taxidermy rather than the soporific Franck quintet. For freshness and sensitivity, the fossilized works you listed cannot hold a candle to again as many pungent works not listed — Schrecker's diamond-sharp "Little Suite," Debussy's "Sonata for flute, harp, and viola," Varese's angular "Octandre," Hindemith's "Solo Viola Sonata," Berg's neurotic "Lyric Suite," Villa-Lobos' "Choros No. 7," and even the formal and poignant Ravel "Trio."

"Still the yearners after antiquity, those who mope for some imaginary nobleness or peace or elegance lost in the past like a fly in amber, must be appeased in an age of ubiquitous appeasement."

It is, of course, authoritarian arrogance of this sort which is demanding all the appeasement these days. There would be a good deal less trouble in the musical as well as political world if so many people did not confuse the "courage of their convictions" with scorn for all values to which they happen to be blind themselves.

However, I suggest that you print the letter to bring to the attention of your readers a number of chamber works which, unsuitable as they are for the purpose of your recent contest, are indeed worth hearing and owning in the opinions of quite a few.

G. W. BAXTER.

Tulsa, Oklahoma.

RECORD NOTES AND REVIEWS

ORCHESTRAL

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 1, in C major, Op. 21* (7 sides); and BRAHMS: *Tragic Overture, Op. 81* (3 sides); played by the B. B. C. Symphony Orchestra, direction Arturo Toscanini. Victor set M-507, five discs, price \$10.00.

■ Toscanini has a way with last movements quite unlike anyone I know (can anyone who has heard it quite forget what he does with the finale of the Haydn 88th?). The elation, the animation and the buoyancy of the last movement here are caught and conveyed as in the Haydn symphony, but with the added joy of a richer and more lifelike reproduction. Toscanini realizes this symphony belongs to the 18th century, and also that in it Beethoven paid homage to Haydn and Mozart. No man is called modern or a pioneer until he liberates himself completely from his predecessors. Although Beethoven was regarded as extreme in his opening movement when this work was first heard, he was criticized more for writing in the manner of Haydn. The touches here that set him apart from Haydn were not recognized at first as earmarks of the great Titan to be met six years later in the *Eroica Symphony*. Such recognition too often comes long afterwards.

I have long wished for a recording of Toscanini's performance of this symphony and now I have it I find myself both pleased and not pleased. I do not suppose it will ever turn out, under the present system of recording, that that perfect experience in the concert hall will ever prove entirely capturable in a recording. Dynamics and nuances are caught in recording today, and conveyed in good reproduction. However, "controls" are essential to good recording and this means the conductor's expression is invariably tampered with to some degree. But there's enough here to make us, in the long run, I am certain, completely grateful to Toscanini and his recorders for his comprehensive performance of this work. No one plays this music, in my estimation, quite as he does.

Even Weingartner's sterling performance fails to convey the full essence of Beethoven as Toscanini does. And, as for Ormandy's ponderous reading, compared to Toscanini's, it is a distorted twin, not the same symphony. The recording of this work is good. In our estimation the lack of unison in the opening chords is a trick of recording, the overtones of the strings apparently being caught sooner than those of the wind instruments. This same thing happened in Weingartner's recording.

The reason for the incongruous coupling of the Beethoven and the Brahms works here is unquestionably the circumstance that each took an odd number of sides, and that Toscanini made no single-face recordings to fill them in. The symphony was brought out in England without a filler-in, but the overture was issued with the menuet from the symphony as an odd side; a rather useless duplication. It is a pity that odd sides were not available, or at least one for the Brahms; for there will be many who will want one work and not the other. Too, Beecham has already given us a splendid performance of Brahms' *Tragic Overture*, which, despite the excellence of Toscanini's, I cannot imagine anyone wishing to discard.

Toscanini takes the overture faster, driving the opening, for example, much harder than Beecham. The latter's pace is closer to Brahms' marking, which is *allegro non troppo*. Toscanini indulges in quite a bit of *rubato* here. His anticipation (beginning of side two) of the slower marking of the middle section of the overture (heard about three-quarters of an inch in) is no more in keeping with the composer's intentions than is his avoidance of its romantic implications. The poetry of the tranquil mood that begins side 3 is masterfully conveyed by Toscanini. One can almost see his finger on his lips urging the players to keep the tone soft and mellow. Of the two recordings, that of Toscanini has the edge on that of Beecham.

—P. H. R.

BEETHOVEN: *Fidelio - Overture*; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Felix Weingartner. Columbia disc No. 69545-D, price \$1.50.

■ When one musician undertakes to record all the works in his particular medium by one composer, the question may be asked whether the emphasis is placed more strongly on the composer or on the performer. Weingartner's Beethoven series is surely a model of interpretative modesty—in fact the distinguished conductor is less open to the accusation of superimposing his own personality upon the music than to the charge of keeping himself too far in the background. But, coming to the point, no such charges could apply to his new *Fidelio* overture. This is a performance of notable poise and vitality. In these qualities he easily surpasses Bruno Walter in his Victor recording made with the B. B. C. Orchestra, which, up to now, had been decidedly the best version on discs. Except for the playing of the horns—which is cleaner with Walter—it seems to me that the odds are all with Weingartner. The Victor recording seemed exceptional when it was new in 1935, but by contrast it now seems rather muffled in tone.

—P. M.

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 94, in G major* ("Surprise"); played by the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony, direction of Howard Barlow. Columbia set No. 363, three discs, price \$5.00.

■ For its second recording the Columbia Broadcasting orchestra, directed by Barlow, presents the familiar and delightful "Surprise" *Symphony*, No. 6 in the old Breitkopf listing of Haydn's symphonies and No. 94 in the new. Of several previously recorded versions of this work, the most outstanding was Koussevitzky's in Victor Set M-55. The present album offers a praiseworthy performance and remarkably clear and vital reproduction, and naturally replaces the Boston set, which was made in 1929.

Mr. Barlow achieves a zestful and well-balanced interpretation marked by a considerable amount of polish and finesse. His scale of dynamics seems rather more suited to Beethoven than Haydn, but this impression may be due to the instrument used by the reviewer and not to anything in the records. The reproduction represents a great advance over that of other orchestral works recently recorded by Columbia in domestic

studios and compares with the best of Victor's products in this field.

We feel safe in recommending this set highly. For those prospective purchasers who are not acquainted with this symphony, it may be well to point out that the leaflet contains several errors. According to the leaflet the second variation of the Andante is "in C major" and the third "in E flat major". These variations are in C minor and C major respectively. The finale is not "in rondo form" but in sonata form with elements of the rondo. The same music-lovers will no doubt be glad to learn that, after increasing its prices for the first album by this orchestra, Columbia has now returned to its standard rates.

—N. B.

McDONALD: *Cakewalk* from *Third Symphony* and MENOTTI: *Amelia Goes to the Ball - Overture*; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction of Eugene Ormandy. Victor disc 15377, price \$2.00.

■ Here are a couple of pieces of contemporary American music. Mr. McDonald has demonstrated his interest in dance forms before. Although we find him here somewhat less convincing than he was in the *Rhumba* movement from his *Rhumba Symphony*, we can hardly deny that this music is ingeniously made and orchestrated; it lacks, however, the brusque jauntiness and satirical imagery of Debussy's famous take-off on the cakewalk in his *Children's Corner Suite*.

Menotti's overture owns some of the qualities that Walton conveyed in his *Portsmouth Point* and Wolf-Ferrari in his *Secret of Susanna*. We found this music less interesting outside of the opera house, but there's no denying it has wit and verve. We can hardly agree with the contention that it suggests a modern Mozart. Menotti is undeniably a highly talented young composer, but he has a long way to go to "suggest a modern Mozart."

Mr. Ormandy gives brilliant performances of these compositions and the recording has been competently realized.

—P. G.

MOZART (arr. Seitz): *L'Epreuve d'amour*; played by London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Efrem Kurtz. Columbia disc No. 69560-D, price \$1.50.

■ In 1928 Ludwiz Seitz found in a German music-collection the manuscript of a ballet

"divertissement" called *Die Rekrutierung oder die Liebes Probe*; according to the title page, the music was taken "mostly" from the "Contradances of Herr Mozart." The work was edited by Roderich von Mojsisovics and published in 1930. There are 16 short pieces, of which half are borrowed from Mozart and the other half are by an unknown hand. The present disc contains seven of these pieces, at least two of which are by Mozart (the first side opens with the *Overture* from K. 106 and the second side begins with *Contretanz 2* from the same opus). All the music recorded here is light and cheerful and, in our opinion, quite inconsequential.

—N. B.

RAVEL: *Bolero*; and HALVORSEN: *March of the Boyards*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction Arthur Fiedler. Victor set M-552, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ Another *Bolero*! And made by some of the same musicians who played it some years ago under Koussevitzky's direction. It seems only last year that Victor reissued the Koussevitzky *Bolero* in a two-pocket album. Since this recording was made as long ago as the Fall of 1937 it would seem to us that someone in Victor still valued highly the older version. So do we!

Koussevitzky and Mengelberg achieve more nuance and hence heighten the aural excitement in their recordings of this work. Fiedler gives a straightforward performance, allowing the accumulation of sound to provide the necessary thrill. His interpretation does not for this reason, in our estimation, catch the attention too well in the beginning. But midway through the piece the amazing clarity in the reproduction of the different instruments makes one realize the superiority of this version from the standpoint of recording. It is to be supposed that no performance of the *Bolero* will ever go through without some sour notes; there are a couple of these on side one. The cut of the grooves in side three is very deep and it may be the "walls" of the record will not last long here, but the reproduction will be found quite remarkable meanwhile — provided the stridency of tone can be handled by one's equipment. We do not believe that a non-metallic needle will do full justice to this recording — anyway not with a heavy pickup.

Halvorsen's familiar march receives a first-rate recording here, and the best performance, we'd say, so far on records. Incidentally, Halvorsen is a Norwegian composer, not a Russian, as so many people

think, owing no doubt to the fact that Russian noblemen were called Boyards. He was married to Grieg's niece, which may account for the strong influence Grieg seems to have exerted on his music.

—P. G.

STRAUSS, Johann: *Waltzes - Roses from the South*, and *Tales from the Vienna Woods* (Bruno Walter and Symphony Orchestra), and *A Thousand and One Nights*, and *Voices of Spring* (Felix Weingartner and Symphony Orchestra). Columbia set 364, four discs, price \$6.00.

■ These are relistings of recordings made a half-dozen or more years ago. Both conductors are eminently competent to play the music of Johann Strauss since both were long associated with Vienna and her musical life. We hardly think that even the most ardent admirers of the Strauss waltzes would expect us to compare the various versions of them on records. Suffice it to say the recording is not "dated" despite its age, and the performances are good. Of course, *Tales from the Vienna Woods* is cut, and not presented in the composer's original scoring, which includes a zither. There is an old Polydor version on three sides, of this particular waltz, made from the original score, that conveys more of the nostalgic spirit of old Vienna than does anything else on records.

—P. H. R.

CONCERTO

LISZT: *Concerto No. 2, in A major*, for piano and orchestra (5 sides); and SCHUBERT-LISZT: *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (piano alone); played by Egon Petri and London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Leslie Heward. Columbia set 362, three discs, price \$5.00.

■ Played considerably less in public than the *E flat Concerto* (No. 1), the *A major Concerto* of Liszt has much more to be said for it. It is written in Liszt's richest and most fervent style, and although it has its pompous moments, it is on the whole one of his most poetic works. Called a symphonic poem for orchestra by the late William Foster Apthorp, who gave it the subtitle "The Life and Adventures of a Melody," this concerto is in one movement, the first and chief theme binding the various episodes into an organic whole. The first theme, melancholy and wailing, is given out at once by woodwinds. The piano enters then, playing the

theme in arpeggios. Next the horn sounds a new and dreamy theme, while the piano accompanies with delicate tonal cascades, followed by a cadenza, which leads into a more strident minor section. The first section (or movement) of the work ends with an orchestral tutti. Now comes a quieter passage (opening side three), built substantially on the main theme, heard in the solo cello against the piano playing broken chords. A subsidiary theme given out by the piano is later taken over by the oboe and the flute, and following another cadenza for the piano, another dramatic outburst takes place. "From this point onward," says Apthorp, "the concerto is one unbroken series of kaleidoscopic effects of the most brilliant and ever-changing description; of musical form, of musical coherence even, there is less and less . . . Never has even Liszt rioted more unreservedly in fitful orgies of flashing color. It is monstrous, formless, whimsical and fantastic, if you will; but it is also magical and gorgeous . . . it is its very daring and audacity that save it."

This work has been recorded twice before, but never so well as regards either interpretation or reproduction. Of these versions that by the late Josef Pembaur, the eminent Austrian pianist, was a more notable performance than that of Arthur De Greef. A particularly ingratiating section of the latter part of the score, cut in the De Greef, but played in the Pembaur performance, is advantageously retained in the present version. Petri's performance here is so superb one does not know where to begin to describe it; it is unquestionably the finest thing he has done so far for the modern phonograph.

The recording is magnificently contrived, the balance between orchestra and piano (the tone of which is most natural) being extraordinarily good. The conductor on his part deserves a word of praise for keeping things in hand and giving at the same time a vivid interpretation.

Mr. Petri's choice of an encore seems to me a poor one. *Gretchen am Spinnrade* is so definitely a song to most of us that we miss the rightful presence of the singer.

—P. H. R.

CHAMBER MUSIC

BACH: *Sonata in A minor*, for flute (unaccompanied); played by René Le Roy. Musicraft set No. 32, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ Discovered a little more than twenty years ago hastily written on the last page

of a manuscript of the solo-violin Partitas, this work is not included in the Bach-Gesellschaft. Although its authenticity has been questioned, Dr. Alfred Einstein for one, is said to regard it as genuine. The annotator points out that this sonata "is definitely related to the Partitas for solo violin, and may have been intended by Bach as an essay in this form for a wind instrument." Divided into four movements—Allemande, Corrente, Sarabande, and Bourrée Anglaise — the sonata is an uneven work. The first two movements are bright and congenially animated, but slight in texture, and the Sarabande is serene in character and melodically simple. The finale is dull.

All of the solo instrumental works of Bach own an austerity; their emotional qualities are far less striking than their technical qualities. In the string works the double stopping and chords supply a contrapuntal interest which is completely missing here. Yet I believe this work will pleasantly surprise the many rather than the few. I have long been an admirer of Le Roy's purity and limpidity of tone. He is one of those rare flutists whose breathing is not obtrusive in his playing, even at close range. Here he plays with appropriate spirit and freedom in the fast movements, and with warmth in the Sarabande. In the latter movement his technique in the highest register is by no means impeccable. The recording here is good, but the surfaces are not as quiet as they might be.

• • •

DVORAK: *Sonatina in G major*, Op. 100 (3 sides); and *Slavonic Dance No. 8 in G mi.*; played by Ossy Renardy (violin) and Walter Robert (piano). Columbia set X-129, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ After his *American Quartet*, Op. 96 and the *Quintet* with two violas, Op. 97, Dvorak wrote his *Sonatina in G major*, which he dedicated to his children. Though slight in subject matter and style, it has much to commend it. Dvorak always could write pleasant tunes, and here, unrestricted by extensive formal requirements he writes with freedom and melodic charm. The work, composed during his visit to America, has a second movement showing American influences similar to those noticeable in his quartet mentioned above and his *New World Symphony*. Kreisler has rearranged this second movement and called it *Indian Lament* and under this title it has become extremely popular. There seems small reason to play this second movement alone when the work abounds in so many other ingratiating melodies.

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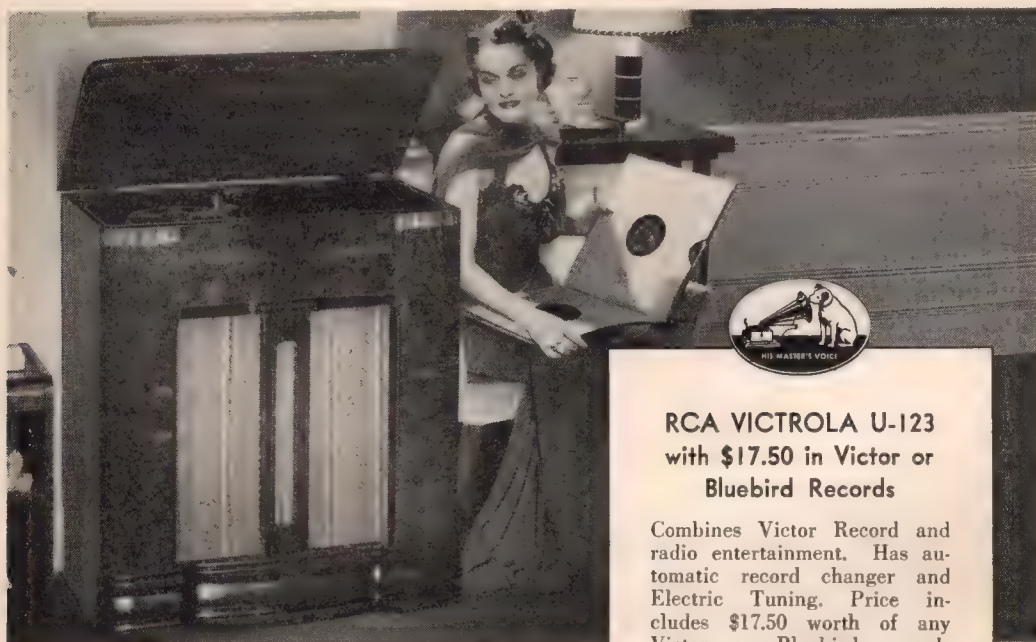
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Ossy Renardy and his accompanist give a good performance of this music, one which will be enjoyed for its freedom from sentimentality. Although the *G minor Slavonic Dance* seems to have been recorded several times in its orchestral dress, this is the first solo violin performance. It is played in an arrangement by Michael Press.

The recording here is good as regards both tone and balance.

—P. H. R.

• • •

FRANCAIX: *Trio in C major*; played by the Pasquier Trio. Columbia set X-130, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ Jean Françaix seems to be the composer of the hour — at any rate he has in his teacher, Naida Boulanger, one of the best press agents in the world today. Allowing something for Mlle. Boulanger's understandable pride and enthusiasm (she goes so far as to liken him to the young Schubert) it is certainly safe to say that Françaix is rapidly taking his place among the important musicians of France. Born in 1912, he still has plenty of time to develop and mature. Meanwhile, as much of his music as has come my way seems to justify the hopes which are held for his future. This is his second important work to reach the American lists — the first actually to be recorded in this country — and it leaves us hoping for more.

It is said that the string trio is the hardest medium to write for in the realm of chamber music. Lacking the easier balance of the string quartet, the task of making the trio sound is a considerable one. In overcoming this difficulty Françaix has been splendidly successful, and in the process he has not lost his ability to write attractive music. We are struck first of all by the cleverness and facility of his writing, but then on repeated hearings it is his genuine melodic gift which makes the strongest impression. His imagination shows itself in the contrasts achieved by the use of mutes. The first and third movements are played *con sordino* throughout — a device which not only gives them a peculiar quality of their own, but emphasizes the brilliance of the second and fourth movements. Without this there might be too much rapid movement in the work, and too many jazz touches. It must be confessed that the rather soulful and sobbing slow movement is the least successful of the four, for here perhaps too much is made of the main theme, and the composer does not quite avoid monotony. But all this is forgotten in the varied finale, with its patches of jaunty harmonics.

The *Trio* was composed in 1933 (as the label helpfully informs us) and is still in manuscript. It is dedicated to the Pasquier brothers, who play it *con amore*. The recording compares favorably with that of the other works these artists have made abroad. In fact it seems to have a new and peculiar vitality of its own. Columbia should provide notes with its two-pocket albums. Victor gave us a leaflet with its issue of the Françaix *Piano Concerto*, which was not, for some strange reason, even housed in an album. These delinquencies on the part of recorders create a bad impression with too many.

—P. M.

• • •

HANDEL: *Sonata VI, in G minor*; played by Mitchell Miller (oboe) and Yella Pessl (harpsichord). Victor disc 15378, price \$2.00.

■ This work belongs to a group entitled *XV Solos for a German flute, Oboe, or Violin with a thorough bass, opera prima*. In the first volume of the *Anthologie Sonore*, Dr. Curt Sachs included the *E major Sonata*, No. 15, from the same collection, performed by oboe and harpsichord, reinforced, as was customary in Handel's time, by a cello. Although these sonatas are more often played by a violinist, Dr. Sachs says that a choice of the instrument used is allowable and, as in the case of the one he recorded, an oboe may be employed instead. This latter instrument, he feels, more than any other captures the "virginal purity" of the music. With this contention we are in full agreement, since hearing the recording of the *E major Sonata*.

The present work is similar in structure and character to most of the others, being in four short movements — two slow and two quick ones. It is a work of quiet and ingratiating charm. Handel was not a great chamber-music composer; the smaller forms definitely played a secondary part in his work. "He wrote in them," says Dr. Sachs, "only to satisfy the requests of enthusiasts anxious to obtain some chamber music from the pen of the great master. Even so, in sonatas or variations, his melodic line is the tonal equivalent of gestures, movements, even of scenes . . . The essence of this music is its visually evocative force, one might almost say its pantomimic power."

Mr. Miller and Miss Pessl play the *G minor Sonata* with appropriate tenderness in the slow movements and with rightful elation in the quicker ones. The balance of the recording is not as good as in the *Anthologie Sonore* disc: this may be due in part to the

absence of a cello here, but it seems to us the oboe is given too much prominence for the good of the ensemble.

—P. H. R.

HAYDN: The String Quartet Society - Vol. 4: *Quartets in F minor, Op. 20, No. 5; E flat major, Op. 50, No. 3; and C major ("Emperor"), Op. 76, No. 3.* Victor set M-526, seven discs, price \$14.00.

Volume 5: *Quartets in D major, Op. 20, No. 4; F major, Op. 74, No. 2; and F major, Op. 77, No. 2.* Victor set M-527, seven discs, price \$14.00.

Volume 6: *Quartets in C major, Op. 1, No. 6; E major, Op. 54, No. 3; A major, Op. 55, No. 1; and G major, Op. 64, No. 4.* Victor set M-528, seven discs, price \$14.00. All performed by Pro Arte Quartet.

■ Last month an article by Cecil Gray, the eminent English writer on music, regarding the place in history of the Haydn quartets, was published here, as well as a review of Volume 3 of The Haydn String Quartet Society.

Two of the quartets in Vol. 4 are available on records apart from this Society issue: the *F minor* from Op. 20 and the "*Emperor*" Quartet from Op. 76. Tovey regards the six quartets that comprise Op. 20 very highly: every page of them, he contends, is of "both historic and aesthetic importance," and, "though the total result leaves Haydn with a long road to travel, there is perhaps so single or sextuple opus in the history of music which has achieved so much or achieved it so quietly." Three of these quartets, Nos. 2, 5 and 6, conclude with vital fugal finales.

The *F minor Quartet*, one of the few that Haydn wrote in a minor key, is a notable work with a tragic implication not often sounded in his music. Gray points out that the sombre qualities are here evident in the opening *allegro moderato* and the fugal finale rather than, as might be expected, in the slow movement. The latter, marked *adagio*, is graceful and tranquil and in the major mode. The finale is a *fuga a due Sogetti* (a fugue with two subjects). One of these motives has an interesting history, which the writer of the notes has seen fit to trace rather than to expand upon the work as a whole.

The Pro Arte Quartet plays this work less compellingly than the Roth Quartet did in its recording (Columbia set 228). The *crescendi* of the first movement, important to a vital presentation of its inner drama, and

similarly the *sforzandi* in both the minuet and the *adagio* are scarcely observed by the Pro Arte group. Personally, I prefer the Roth performance of this work.

In view of the fact that the Lener String Quartet has given a performance as satisfying as that of the Pro Arte here of the "*Emperor*" Quartet, the chief value of this set would seem to be in the inclusion of the *E flat Quartet, Op. 50, No. 3.*

The *E flat Quartet* belongs to a group dedicated by Haydn to Frederick William II, King of Prussia. Besides the fact that the quartet was written about the time when Mozart wrote his famous six quartets dedicated to Haydn, the work has no special historic significance. Tovey regards it as one of Haydn's greatest works and one that should be better known. For this reason it is too bad that it cannot be purchased apart from its companions. To the student this work will furnish striking testimony of Haydn's ingenious economy in the employment of his thematic material. The opening theme of the first movement, which he proceeds to develop before bringing in a counter subject, is the kernel for much that comes afterwards. Indeed parts of the opening melodies of the second and fourth movements are drawn from it.

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The *C major Quartet, Op. 76, No. 3*, which derives its sobriquet "*Emperor*" from the fact that its slow movement is made up of variations on the former Austrian national anthem, composed by Haydn himself, is a work built on a large scale. Gray states that its first and last movements "suggest at times that it may have been conceived originally for a larger medium than the string quartet." His contention that the sound produced by the instruments sometimes is "almost orchestral" and its structure "seems at times almost symphonic" is entirely true.

Volume 5 opens with a recording of the fourth quartet from the highly regarded Opus 20. The wide popularity of this work (it has been played more often in public than the other five quartets of the group) may be traced, according to Tovey, to the facts that its first and last movements are in Haydn's "most comic vein" and the slow movement owns an appealing melancholy. The alternating *forte* and *piano* of the first movement are, as Gray says, "vivid, striking, dramatic, and at the same time highly poetic and imaginative."

Tovey calls the *F major Quartet, Op. 74, No. 2*, a neglected masterpiece. The bustling spirit and deftly pointed phrases of the first movement are a sheer delight. Its virtuoso elements demand much of the players. One can hardly imagine anyone ever tiring of this music. The grace and manners of an old-world court are reflected in the *andante grazioso*, but the minuet pays its homage to the people. Gray marks this latter movement as being "exceedingly resourceful and subtle" in its polyphonic writing. The finale, with its bristling spirit recalls the first movement in style. It too demands much of the players.

Opus 77, No. 2, apart from another, unfinished, product, was the last quartet Haydn wrote. Tovey says that except for a couple of the last symphonies it is his greatest instrumental work. We cannot agree with the annotator that analysis is scarcely necessary, or that the thematic material given is enough for the listener. Gray's analysis of this quartet, furnished with the original issue of this set, brings out a number of important points which do much to enhance the listeners' enjoyment and understanding of the work.

"The most striking stylistic feature of the present work," says Gray, "consists in its strongly marked Mozartean character. The personalities and styles of the two masters are widely different when one looks at their work as a whole, but there are isolated examples which might conceivably have been

written by either of them, and this is one of these works. But needless to say, no disparagement is implied. If this quartet were by Mozart, one could only say that it was Mozart at his best; certainly none of his own quartets surpasses it.

"This Mozartean character comes out, firstly, in clarity, precision and classical symmetry of form, whereas Haydn . . . is anything but classic and orthodox in this respect; secondly in the prevalence of eight-bar periods, whereas Haydn often shows a marked predilection for asymmetrical groupings of . . . bars; thirdly, in the cultivation of a vein of chromatic harmony which we associate far more readily with Mozart than with Haydn."

The first movement Gray finds "decidedly Mozartean in character" and the *Menuetto* that follows almost Beethovenian. The lovely *andante*, "a splendid example of Haydn's late variation style," is harmonically rich and beautifully melodic. The finale, more complex formally and built on a larger scale than is usual with Haydn, is an imposing climax to a notable work.

The inclusion of this quartet in Volume 5 has an interesting history. When this set was issued in the Spring of 1936 it was announced that it was the last of the Haydn String Quartet Society albums; and owing to this belief on the part of the sponsors, (fortunately not borne out by subsequent events), it was decided that no quartet was more fitting than Haydn's last finished one to conclude what was expected to be the last volume of the Society.

At the beginning of his notes to Volume 6, Gray says that the decision made with the issuance of Volume 5 that there would be no other Haydn quartet sets has found a reprieve: "sentence of death has been temporarily revoked and may even be commuted should sufficient support for this album be forthcoming." The recent issue of Volume 7 indicates an extension of the reprieve, which we sincerely hope will be extended further in due time.

Volume 6, originally issued in 1937, opens with an early opus, which Gray thinks is of more historical than esthetic interest. "To view thus, side by side, the final and maturest example of the master's art, and one of the earliest and most rudimentary examples of it," he says, "is a curiously moving experience, as if one were to find on alternate pages of a book the portrait of a man in the prime of his maturity, and one of him lying in his cradle." The slow movement is the

most important of this work, and is particularly interesting for its use of the mute, which Haydn employed only on three other occasions in his eighty-odd quartets. The work, in five movements, has two minuets.

Like Op. 50, Opus 54 is dedicated to Frederick William II. The third and last of this series, here recorded, possesses a first movement that is particularly arresting for the contrasted part-writing, and a slow movement of tender songful character with an ingratiating rhythmic freedom. Of the next quartet, in *A major*, Op. 55, No. 1, Tovey says it is as great as its more famous companion, the "*Razor*" Quartet, Op. 55, No. 2, "with an *adagio* in rondo form (a very difficult thing to handle with Haydnesque breadth) a remarkable use of the extreme heights of the violin in the trio of the minuet . . . and a finale which begins like a rondo, and runs away in an excellent (unofficial) fugue."

The *G major Quartet*, Op. 64, No. 4 belongs to the same group as the famous "*Lark*" Quartet (No. 5). The first movement, in the composer's more genial, comic vein, and the minuet are distinguished by their unusually contrasted instrumental lines. Haydn is completely untroubled in this music.

Although the Pro Arte Quartet is to be praised for its finely schooled technique, its polished unity, and its sterling musicality in the performances of all the quartets, for me the players' dynamic gamut is often too restricted for the best interpretative results.

From the reproductive side the music has been well served, although the recording lacks the brilliance of the most recent chamber music sets made in this country.

For those who want the complete series but cannot afford to get it all at once, we recommend that Volume 5 be acquired first, Volume 3 second, Volume 6 third, and Volume 4 last.

—P. H. R.

RAMEAU: 1. *La Timide*. 2. *L'Indiscrete*, and *Pantomime*. Victor disc No. 1975, 10-inch, price \$1.50.

RAMEAU: *La Cupis*, and *Tambourins*. Victor disc No. 1976, 10-inch, price \$1.50. Both played by Georges Barrère (flute), Carlos Salzedo (harp), and Horace Britt (cello).

■ These compositions, taken from Rameau's *Pièces de Clavecins en concerts*, were originally devised for violin or flute, viola da gamba or second violin, and harpsichord. Replacing the harpsichord with the harp, and the gamba with modern cello, does not neces-

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sarily falsify the composer's intentions, but for those who are familiar with this music in a performance in which the harpsichord is employed, the use of the harp in its place may well prove unsatisfactory. As Dr. Curt Sachs has said, in Rameau's work "the last trace of a figured bass has disappeared and the harpsichord has the same importance in the trio as the violin and gamba." Hence, the brisk, biting qualities of the harpsichord, which are intended to supply a stronger and clearer line to the music, definitely belong here. There will probably be many who will admire these recordings, however, not only from the standpoint of performance, for they are competently played by three distinguished musicians, but also from the standpoint of tonal beauty.

Personally I prefer other recordings of these pieces, namely, disc 30 from L'Anthologie Sonore, which contains Rameau's tonal characterizations of three contemporary fiddlers — Forqueray, Cupis, and Marais, and French HMV disc DB-5055, which contains his tonal pictures *L'Indiscrète*, *La Rameau* and *Pantomime*. The latter disc, performed by the Ars Rediviva, a Parisian trio, deserves to be brought forward in this country. It is a true gem. A striking instance of the loss of an effect intended by the composer is supplied in the present recording of *Tambourin* when compared to the recording of this piece made by the Trio Trillat on French Columbia D-11018. In the latter case a piano and two violins are used but the keyboard instrument supplies the requisite bite to the music.

Recording here is excellent. —P. H. R.

History of Music

COLUMBIA HISTORY OF MUSIC, Volume 5. *The Twentieth Century*. Columbia set No. 361, eight 10-inch discs, with pamphlet, price \$10.00 (Sold as a unit only.)

■ Columbia's one-man historical record-show comes to an end with this album. In an introduction to his booklet, Dr. Percy A. Scholes, the originator of the series, explains how he divided his five-volume record history into what he terms "The Five Periods in the History of European Music." Volume 1—First Period, the seven hundred years from A. D. 900 to 1600. Volume 2—Second Period, from 1600 to 1750. Volume 3—Third Period, from 1750 to about 1830. Volume 4—Fourth Period, from 1830 to 1900. Volume 5—Fifth Period, "the nearly forty years of the present century . . ."

The author tells us that the experimentation in music during the period "in which we are living has affected every element in music — Rhythm, Key and Scales, Melody, Harmony, Form, and Orchestration . . ." and that his choice of material has been made to embrace all this. It must be said at the outset, whether one agrees with his choice of material or not, that it does present a cross-section of the music of our times.

The following records comprise Vol. 5:

ELGAR: *Sospiri*, Op. 70; String Orch. with harp, dir. Walter Goehr, and STRAUSS: *Intermezzo* from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Disc DB1300.

DEBUSSY: No. 3 of *Six Epigraphes Antiques*; Max Pirani and Eric Grant (pianists), and RAVEL: *The Enchanted Flute* from *Schéhrazade*; Rose Walter with Orchestra. Disc DB1301.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Kyrie* from *Communion Service in G mi.*; Westminster Abbey Choir and BAX: *Paeon*; Harriet Cohen (pianist). Disc DB1302.

MAHLER: *I Breathed the Breath of Blossoms Red*; sung by Chas. Kullman with Orch.; and SCHOENBERG: Nos. 5 and 12 of *Buch der Hängenden Gaerten*; sung by Erica Storm with piano accom. Disc DB1303.

MILHAUD: *Symphony No. 3*; Orchestra dir. Goehr; and CASELLA: *Tarantella* from *Serenata*; Instrumental Quintet. Disc DB1304.

HINDEMITH: *Scherzo* for Viola and Cello; Hindemith and Feuermann, and FALLA: *Homage for The Tomb of Debussy*; Albert Harris, guitarist.

STRAVINSKY: *Excerpt* from *Les Noces*; Vocal Ensemble with Percussion Orch., and BARTOK: *Staccato and Ostinato* for piano; Bela Bartok. Disc DB1306.

VARESE: *Octandre - Third Mt.*; Instrumental Ensemble dir. Goehr, and HABÁ: *Duo for Two Violins in Sixth-Tones*, Op. 49 - *First Mt.*; Wiesmeyer and Stein. Disc DB1307.

Both Strauss and Elgar were composers of bigger scores than they are represented by here. The disadvantage of forming a historical survey like the present set, or its four predecessors, lies in the fact that one must select snippets rather than works of greater consequence to represent the musical men of history. Dr. Scholes begins with Elgar's finely poised *Sospiri*, a short but characteristic work of its composer, thus paying homage to "dear old England" first of all. Elgar is followed by Strauss. The choice of the *Intermezzo* from the incidental music, written in 1912, for Molière's famous play proves all to the good. It is, as Dr. Scholes states, in

every bar typically Straussian, "in melody, harmony and orchestration." It is a younger and slighter relative of *Till Eulenspiegel*.

Next in line Scholes places Mahler, the "classic-romantic". The choice of one of this composer's finest songs is something to be thankful for. Yet, why is this song sung in English, while Schönberg's two songs are sung in German?

Falla's *Homage for The Tomb of Debussy*, which follows, hardly represents the composer satisfactorily, in my estimation. It may be assumed that its choice here was governed by the fact that "Falla believes intensely in the future of the guitar." After this comes Vaughan Williams' *Kyrie* from the *Mass in G minor*, and then Bax's *Paeon* for piano. Neither of these works does full justice to its composer. This first group of selections Mr. Scholes places under the head of "The Later Romanticism."

Under "Impressionism" are grouped the following selections: Debussy's *Third Epigraphique Antique* for piano duet, a piece typical of the composer's "delicate fancifulness"; the beautiful Ravel song (sung to no good advantage in English); and Milhaud's *Serenade* or *Third Symphony*, for small orchestra, a quasi-jazz work dating from 1921 — hardly one of the composer's important scores.

Under "Atonality and Expressionism" are grouped the following compositions: part of the *Second Scene* from Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, a work which fully represents the genius of its composer; Casella's *Finale* from his *Serenata* for clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, violin and cello, a tarantella-like dance movement, exciting in a genuinely wholesome and rowdyish manner; Hindemith's *Scherzo* for viola and cello (especially written for the present set), a work showing its composer's neo-classic tendencies and Bartok's percussive studies for the piano from his *Mikrokosmos*.

Under "Expressionism" are placed Schönberg's songs, *Saget mir auf welchem Pfade* and *Wenn sich bei heiliger ruh* from his cycle of 15 songs (*The Book of the Hanging Gardens*) dating from 1908 — a work with which the composer "definitely and completely abandoned tonality." These songs are interesting for a curious blending of romanticism (in the vocal part) and atonalism (in the accompaniment). Under "Extremism in Instrumental Treatment" is Varèse's *Finale* to *Octandre*; Scholes appropriately states "it would be difficult to describe the course of the composition, which must be heard to be believed." And under the heading of "Micro-



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tonality" comes Hába's sixth-tone composition. These last two works, which undoubtedly belong in a collection like this, are typical of the test-tube experimenting in modern music which may result in new materials for the stock-in-trade of future geniuses.

The performance and recording of all this music have been on the whole satisfactorily if not outstandingly achieved. Dr. Scholes has taken to task English reviewers of this set of records in a manner which seems to us rather arbitrary. His statement, in a letter to *The Gramophone*, that the one important thing in this album is that it "offers the music lover, for the first time, an opportunity to study in a systematic way the aims of the composers of our own time" (italics by Dr. Scholes), is, I feel, an exaggeration. Almost all of the composers here have been better or at least equally as well represented on records elsewhere. The only exception is Hába. As for the value of Dr. Scholes' notes, that is another question entirely. They are excellently prepared and can profitably be read by both musician and music lover. They can be procured from the Oxford University Press.

—P. H. R.

KEYBOARD

BOELLMANN: *Toccata* (from *Suite Gothique*); and GIGOUT: *Toccata*; played by Edouard Commette, on the organ of the Cathedral Saint-Jean, Lyons. Columbia disc 69523D, price \$1.50.

■ This disc would seem to be a re-recording to replace Columbia 50125-D, which has been out of the catalogue for several years. The selections are brilliant examples of the 19th-century French school of organ music, and as they often do duty in church as postludes and as recital material, their appearance on records is only natural. Taken together they have a certain special interest, since Boëllmann was a pupil of Gigout at the Niedermeyer School in Paris. Both pieces make easy listening, and both are played competently on this record.

Edouard Commette is Columbia's mystery man. As organist at the cathedral at Lyons he must be a musician of standing, and to judge from the number of his recordings he must have a large following in France. Nevertheless, all attempts to learn anything about him have proved futile, and we must accept him on the merits of his discs. If the usual charges are made against this not too clear recording, the blame is most probably due the type of organ and the acoustics of the

Lyons cathedral. It is a paradox that the organ, which needs clarity above all else, is associated so intimately with just the type of building in which this quality is hardly possible.

—P. M.

FRENCH PIANO MUSIC; played by Emma Boynet. Victor Set M-549, five 10-inch discs, price \$5.50.

■ This album presents an interesting cross-section of French piano music from about 1880 to 1910. The six compositions are skillfully written for the instrument; and if none reaches the heights, all are pleasant and none is wholly insignificant. Gabriel Fauré is represented by an elaborate and poetic *Barcarolle*, Op. 66, a characteristic piece that gives this listener the impression of being slightly too long for its material. Of Gabriel Pierné, there is a rather empty and repetitious *Nocturne en forme de valse*, Op. 40, No. 2, which sounds like neither a nocturne nor a waltz. This is followed by the charming and playful *Baigneuses au soleil* by Déodat de Séverac, which also seems spun out a little more than is good for it. A touch of rhythmic vitality is added to the set by the rollicking *Bourée fantasque* and the capricious *Idylle* of Emmanuel Chabrier. The last piece is Debussy's truly original *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*, the fourth of his *Préludes*, Book I.

Emma Boynet, who is a pupil and assistant of the noted pianist and pedagogue Isidore Philipp, performs these works cleanly and delicately. Her technique is more than sufficient for her needs, and she plays with a singing tone, a wide variety of nuance, and a thorough understanding of the music. She is assisted by very good reproduction. The Fauré and Pierné pieces seem to be first recordings; the Séverac work was recorded by Blanche Selva for Columbia; the Chabrier compositions have been available only in European pressings; and the Debussy was most recently recorded by Giesecking in his set of the *Préludes* issued by Columbia.

—N. B.

HAYDN: *Fantasia in C major*; SHOSTAKOVICH: *Three Fantastic Dances*, Op. 1. (one disc); BEETHOVEN: *Fantasia in G mi.*, Op. 77 (one disc); SCHUMANN: *Fantasiestück in A flat*, Op. 111, No. 2; BRAHMS: *Fantasia (Intermezzo)*, Op. 116, No. 4 (one disc); and SCRIBIN: *Fantasia in B minor*, Opus 28; played by Grace Castagnetta. Timely set, price \$6.00.

■ In making an album of *Fantasias Timely* has contributed something different to the record library. The pieces, well chosen and not too constricted in style, hang together as a program very nicely. The pianist, Grace Castagnetta, will not be unfamiliar to record buyers, since she participated in Timely's recording of the Mozart two-piano sonata. She is a capable player, a gracious artist rather than a compelling one.

The alert, wide-awake qualities of the Haydn *Fantasia* make of it an excellent opener for this set of improvisatory pieces. The Shostakovich dances coming next offer marked contrast. Conceived in an impudent nose-thumbing spirit, they are not of great consequence. The Beethoven *Fantasia* is the cream of the album, a composition anticipating the keyboard writing of the composer's last period (as evidenced in, for example, the *Diabelli Variations*). The Schumann piece is the middle one of three intended by the composer to be played together. Its quiet romanticism and poetic sentiment, although well set forth here, are unfortunately disturbed by excessive surface noise. The Brahms work, better known under the title of *Intermezzo*, one of the composer's most expressive piano fantasias, has already been played to better advantage on Victor 14138 by Bakhaus. The Scriabin *Fantasia* is representative of its composer, with the harmonic clichés and rhythmic irregularities for which he has been both praised and blamed. As in his larger and more mature works for piano, the mood of this one is generally passionate and the climax is fervently intense. It recalls much that came before, and after in the composer's music, the first half, for example, anticipating his *Fourth Sonata, Opus 30*.

Although there is admirable clarity of detail in the recording, the piano tone is not of the most resonant variety; it tends to be somewhat brittle in the climaxes and there is a lack of vivifying chamber resonance behind it. We particularly recommend the Beethoven disc, and for those who admire his music the Scriabin one also. The album has an illustration on its cover and includes an informal and discursive booklet by Hendrik Willem van Loon. . . .

RAVEL: *Alborado del Gracioso, No. 4* from *Miroirs*; played by Jesus Maria Sanromá. Victor disc 4425, 10-inch, price \$1.00.

■ Jean-Aubrey, the French critic, has said of this piece that it leaves indifferent none who hears it. "One is left to choose only between finding it unbearably irritating or enjoying it, as I do, with others . . . as one of

the victories of the modern musical spirit, as one of the expressions in which are concentrated the sense of . . . the best part of our genius since the *fabliaux* and the early folk songs . . ."

This piece was published in a group of five called *Miroirs* in 1906. Later Ravel orchestrated it so successfully that it came to be better known in its new form. Proof of this would seem to reside in the fact that three recordings of the orchestral version have been issued in this country to date, but none of the original piano version.

The title here has been translated as *The Morning Serenade of a Merry Jester*. There is no program, although there have been attempts to read one into it, for instance: The Jester serenades somewhat vigorously. His passion rises and then falls. " . . . he becomes urgent, intense; he contrasts, with exquisite art, his passion with his desire." The guitars thrum. And then he makes an effort to mount a creeper or trellis; " . . . tries and fails in as many moments," but at the end he arrives. The music is picturesque — a bit of tonal ironic imagery. Ravel could be slick and clever, and he could always calculate his effects with perfect aplomb. This piece can be irritating as well as enjoyable!

Mr. Sanromá, the Puerto Rican pianist, gives a zestful account of the music, one that conveys the wit and irony of its scene. The recording is bright and metallic, quite in character perhaps, but not too complimentary to true piano tone. —P. H. R.

. . .

SCRIABIN: *Etude, Op. 2, No. 1; Prelude, Op. 11, No. 2*; and RACHMANINOFF: *Etude tableau in F minor; Prelude in G sharp minor*; played by Anatole Kitain. Columbia disc 69569-D, price \$1.50.

■ Anatole Kitain is one of the most active of recording pianists these days. With this new release he turns from the more usual repertoire to the moderately modern Scriabin and Rachmaninoff. This is, of course, not turning so very far, for the early Scriabin pieces have in them more than a reminder of Chopin, and Rachmaninoff can hardly claim to be free of the influence of his great predecessors. Nevertheless, all four of these pieces come as a welcome change, although they are not all new to recording. The fact that they all come together here gives the disc a certain advantage over its various rivals. Furthermore, Kitain plays them all in clean and musical style, losing nothing of their picturesqueness. His tone has been pleasantly recorded. —P. M.

SCHUMANN: *Davidsbüundlertänze*, Opus 6; played by Kurt Appelbaum. Musicraft Album No. 30, three discs, price \$5.00.

■ Mr. Appelbaum, from whom we had a Schubert sonata recently, offers as his second American recording another sensitive and fine-grained performance of a Romantic composition. The *Davidsbüundlertänze* lack the kaleidoscopic color and extravagant contrast of Schumann's *Carnaval*, which fact probably explains the relatively infrequent appearance of the former on concert programs, but these dances make up for that lack by an introspective, nostalgic quality that pervades the whole set. Schumann himself expressed the difference between the two works perfectly. "The *Davidsbüundler*," he wrote, "... are to [the *Carnaval*] as faces are to masks." Not all of the 18 short movements represent Schumann at his best — there are a few arid passages; but there is enough of deep emotion and solid construction to stamp the work as one of the composer's finer things.

There are some minor blemishes in the performance — one or two left-hand passages in No. 10 are slightly blurred and the left-hand accompaniment in No. 15 is too loud — as well as in the reproduction — some of the surfaces are a bit noisy and clicks are audible on sides 3 and 5 — but as a whole both the interpretation and the recording are worthy of Schumann. In omitting No. 7 Musicraft has departed from its admirable policy of recording complete and authentic versions of the music it chooses. It is difficult to see why, except perhaps in the interests of economy (the inclusion of No. 7 apparently would have required spreading the work over four discs). Whatever the reason, this is still the most complete version available, since the set made ten years ago by Fanny Davies (Columbia No. 142) omits four numbers.

—N. B.

BAND

SOUSA: *Fairest of the Fair—March*, and *High School Cadets — March*; played by the Goldman Band, under the direction of Edwin Franko Goldman. Victor disc 26191, 10-inch, price 75 cents.

■ The Goldman Band series of Sousa marches continues with two moderately familiar items from the not inconsiderable repertoire. Everything that was said of the last release might well be repeated here. The marches are cut in the familiar Sousa pattern, and no one knows better than Mr. Goldman how to play them. The recording is good, although

perhaps the tone is a bit constricted — a studio job, no doubt. I am sure that the disc will fill its requirements satisfactorily.

—P. M.

VOCAL WORKS

BRAHMS: *Deutsche Volkslieder*, Vol. 1 (Nine Songs); sung by Ernest Wolff, baritone, accompanying himself at the piano. Columbia Set No. X-128, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ In 1894 Brahms published 49 settings of German folk-songs, 42 for voice and piano and 7 for soloist and mixed chorus. The present album includes *Es steht ein' Lind'* (No. 41); *Feinsliebchen, du sollst mir nicht barfuss gehn* (No. 12); *Schwesterlein* (No. 15); *Wach' auf mein' Herzensschöne* (No. 16); *Erlaube mir, fein's Mädchen* (No. 2); *Da unten im Tale* (No. 6); *Die Sonne scheint nicht mehr* (No. 5); *Maria ging aus wandern* (No. 14); and *Mein Mädel hat einen Rosenmund* (No. 25). Five of these — Nos. 41, 16, 6, 5, and 14 — are first recordings.

Brahms was very fond of these beautiful melodies, and his setting are reverent and restrained, in every case greatly enhancing the emotional qualities of the text and music. The group here presented is well varied, ranging in mood from gay, light-hearted pieces like Nos. 12 and 25 through lyric songs like Nos. 41, 2, 6, and others (including No. 5, which contains striking alternations of duple and triple time) to the tragic connotations of No. 15.

Wolff sings here in a simple and forthright manner. His voice has a pleasant quality, he enunciates the text clearly, and he plays the accompaniments expressively. His voice, however, lacks variety of color, a failing particularly noticeable when the songs are heard as a group. Nor has he the vocal technique essential for such a song as *Schwesterlein*, where the fact that it is a dialogue between "Schwesterlein" and "Brüderlein" is barely indicated. Superior vocalism and interpretative ability make the Gerhardt recordings of Nos. 12, 2, and 25 and Lotte Lehmann's version of No. 25 more rewarding experiences.

The recording is excellent. It seems to be Columbia's policy not to issue notes with its "X" sets. This is particularly unfortunate in the case of an album like this, where the texts with English translations would probably greatly increase enjoyment of the records.

—N. B.

FALLA: *Jota* (No. 4 from *Siete Canciones populares Españolas*); OBRADORS: *Consejo* (from *Don Quijote de la Mancha*); sung by Lucrezia Bori, soprano, with piano accompaniment by George Copeland. Victor disc, No. 1978, 10-inch, price \$1.50.

■ This is the first record of a series made by Miss Bori with the assistance of no less a pianist than George Copeland. It is a disc which the Bori following will undoubtedly want, for it shows the singer in good voice, by her later day standards, and proves that she has lost nothing of her charm and her distinctive artistry. And Mr. Copeland proves to be a more than satisfactory collaborator in this colorful type of music.

The Falla song is, of course, no novelty. Taken from the well-known set of *Seven Spanish Songs*, which has been several times recorded in its entirety, the *Jota* has also appeared not infrequently by itself. It has been often transcribed, and is available to record buyers in a number of guises. Miss Bori's performance is among the most artistic and pleasing I have heard.

The *Consejo* is new to me, and I have not been able to learn anything about it or its composer. He is obviously of our times, and a musician of some originality. Just what *Don Quijote de la Mancha* may be — an opera, a cycle, or a work in some unpredictable form — I do not know. The label gives the helpful subtitle, *The Story of Impertinent Curiosity*, which is fairly suggestive of the song Miss Bori sings. Aside from occasional tonal acidity — which will be emphasized by old-fashioned machines — Bori's singing is again delightful, and Copeland plays the piano part with altogether charming whimsicality. —P. M.

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HERBERT: *Melodies* — *Selections from Naughty Marietta, The Fortune Teller, Mademoiselle Modiste, Babes in Toyland, Sweethearts and The Red Mill; Badinage; Air de Ballet; Al Fresco*; sung and played by Anne Jamison (soprano), Jan Peerce (tenor), Tom Thomas (baritone), Vladimir Selinsky (violin), and the Victor Salon Group, direction of Nathaniel Shilkret. Victor set C-33, five discs, \$7.50.

■ Every so often Victor finds occasion to issue a Victor Herbert album. This new set is a recording of the Magic Key Broadcast which marked the eightieth anniversary of the composer's birth, February 1, 1939. Actually, I believe, it is a redoing of the first Herbert album which was made a long time

ago. This time Victor has been even more lavish in the manner of presentation, and of course the new set has the inevitable benefit of improved recording. Most of the best and most popular Herbert is in this selection, and with the glamor imparted by the names of the radio artists assembled it is sure to be a best seller.

Perhaps, after all, this is the best way to take Victor Herbert, for every one of his operettas has libretto trouble. Given a W. S. Gilbert, his supporters claim, he might have developed into an American Sullivan, but one can hardly say that he did. Even so, his melodic gifts were sufficiently great, and still hold their own well enough to insure periodic revivals of his works on the stage. There are plenty of good tunes in this album, and they follow one another in such profusion that the Perfect Herbertite can spend the better part of an hour revelling in them.

Nathaniel Shilkret had the advantage of playing under Herbert himself, and his sympathy with the music is obvious in his direction of it. It was he who presided over the previous Herbert albums, and the fact of his redoing the first is indication enough of the care and devotion which he puts into his task. The soloists are all well-known to radio audiences. Anne Jamison's attractive, if rather tentative voice, is equal to the high flights of the *Italian Street Song* and to the lyricism of *Kiss Me Again*, and Jan Peerce gives himself with his accustomed freedom to his various bits. More distinguished, to my mind, is the baritone voice of Tom Thomas, who is capable of more important things. It will be remembered that he was a winner in the Metropolitan auditions several seasons ago. The presence of the Victor Salon Group indicates what sort of arrangements Shilkret has made, and for once here is music to which such arrangements are appropriate. Admirers of Victor Herbert are quite safe in ordering Victor Album C-33.

—P. M.

• •

STEINBERG (Arr.): *Chanson d'amour du Turkestan; Complainte d'Abdurachman; Altaï; Dudar-Aï*; sung by Lydia Chaliapine, contralto, with orchestra. Two Columbia discs, P-4230-M, P-4231-M, ten-inch, price \$1.00 each.

■ This intensely interesting and unusual pair of discs introduces Lydia Chaliapine, the daughter of the great basso. It also brings to our attention music completely new to most of us, and very well worth knowing.

A great work which was begun in Russia long before the Revolution, and which has been carried on by the Soviets, is the collecting of folk-songs in the various parts of that vast country. The melodies presented here were discovered in Turkestan, Abdurachman, Siberia and Kazakstan respectively. The arranger, Maxmilian Steinberg, has been called the heir to the traditions of his father-in-law, Rimski-Korsakoff, of Glazounow, and of others of the elder nationalistic school. He has utilized the resources of orchestration as he learned them from Rimski, and his instrumentation is rich and atmospheric.

There are, of course, many ways of arranging folk songs. Some believe in keeping them as simple and unadorned as possible, while others strive to make art-music out of the material they collect from the people. Steinberg strikes somewhere in the middle ground, using his unfolksy orchestra to produce folksy effects. Two of the lovely modal melodies are plaintive and desolate, and the others are spirited. There should be an eager public to welcome this haunting music.

Miss Chaliapine's voice is a thoroughly Russian one, vibrant with that intensity which is the heritage of her people. In quality it is not unlike a contralto version of that of Nina Koshetz. Without proving herself a great singer, she demonstrates beyond any question that she has inherited something of her father's expressiveness in song. The recording is very good, but the surfaces are not as smooth as they might be.

—P. M.

STRAUSS: *Traum durch die Dämmerung*; and LEMBCKE: *Mailed*; sung by Lauritz Melchior with accompaniment by Ignace Strasfogel. Victor disc 1980, 10-inch, price \$1.50.

■ The ways of Victor's repertoire department are beyond human understanding. If we are to take their publicity seriously there is a great and growing interest in recorded lieder. Therefore Victor feeds us one record after another of the same limited selection of songs. With all the unrecorded Strauss still remaining untouched we are now given another *Traum durch die Dämmerung*. From this one might infer that public interest is actually not in the songs at all, but in the singers who record them. Anyone who wanted this lied must have been satisfied some time ago with the Schumann disc (Victor 14076), or, if he recently acquired the Jansen version (Victor 1930) he is not likely to run after another new one by Melchior. But

such considerations aside, the tenor gives a performance characteristic of his more restrained moods, and his voice is in excellent shape. One might wish that he had finished the song perfectly in tune — the last tone is a shade flat — and that Mr. Strasfogel had given him more support at the climax, but the record is in most respects a good one.

The Lembecke song is not, as the uninitiated might suspect (I was one of the uninitiated) another German lied. It is a rather ordinary Scandinavian song, full of ebullient spirits appropriate to the present season. Here Mr. Melchior lets himself go. As an unstinted outpouring of his voice, this side of the disc will give much pleasure. The recording is good, although it leans a little, like all Victor recordings of its type, too much toward the singer at the expense of the pianist.

—P. M.

Untempered Harmony

MUSICOLOGICAL RECORDS, Nos. 1-12, six 12-inch discs. Musicological Records, 39 West Cheltenham Ave., Philadelphia, Pa. Price \$10.

■ Mr. N. Lindsay Norden has devoted many years to the study of the theory and practice of just temperament. These records present a lecture by Mr. Norden on the "Untempered Harmony of A Capella Music." He points out that training in equal temperament has created many difficulties for choruses and has caused many composers to write choral music that is practically unsingable. Just intonation, Mr. Norden claims, does away with most of these difficulties, and he proceeds to explain how, illustrating his discourse on a "diatone", a reed organ in just intonation. There are also exercises in the proper tuning of various chords, these exercises being intended for use in the classroom. The records should be of great interest to conductors and choirmasters. Two additional discs have been issued, on which the untempered harmony of certain choral compositions is analyzed; and a third, dealing with a "Comparative Study of Four Intonations," is announced for early distribution.

—N. B.

Correspondence

To the Editor.

No indeed — G. W. B. is far from hopeless. I have four recordings of Brahms' "Feldeinsamkeit," and feel that Gerhard's outdistanced by any one of the other three.

HENRY S. GERSTLE.

New York City.

RECORD SALES AND EXCHANGES

Rates: Advertisements for this section are priced at 25 cents a line, with a minimum charge of 50 cents.

Historic and celebrity discs and cylinders, mostly European rarities, phonograph literature, catalogs, music books, etc. Write for catalogue. McBride's, 70 N. Sierra Bonita Ave., Pasadena, California.

Will exchange for others of equal value, or sell, hundreds of latest high fidelity records. Write for list which includes, among others: Schubert Impromptus M494, \$8.00. Brahms Song Society Vol. I \$8.00. Moussorgsky Boris Synthesis M391, \$3.90. Medtner Piano Pieces M384, \$7.20. Sibelius Symphonic Poems M311, \$3.00. Verdi Rigoletto Complete Col. \$13.95. Elgar Cello Concerto Col. 247, \$2.95. Tchaikowsky Symphony No. 4, M327, \$6.00. Symphony No. 6, M337, \$6.00. Mozart Symphony No. 40, M293, \$3.90. Symphony No. 25 Col. 323, \$2.75. Brahms Clarinet Sonata Musicraft M27, \$2.95. All records are guaranteed in perfect condition. Nominal fee charged for exchanging records. Join our society for keeping records circulating among collectors. R. C. E. JONES, 76 W. 48th St., N. Y. C.

Record Collectors' Corner

Collector's Corner — 1989

Roland B. Gelatt

■ May 1st, 1989: You may remember reading one of my columns several months ago in which I reported finding a Victor catalogue issued in 1938. I wondered at the time, looking at the list of recordings by the great singers of that wonderful age, whether I would ever have the opportunity of hearing them all. You can imagine my amazement and joy when I discovered, a few days ago, in an old warehouse, a wonderfully complete collection of recordings by the three great sopranos of the legendary Golden Age of the 1930's, Flagstad, Lehmann and Leider. This collection contains not only all the Victors, but also Deccas of Lehmann, and a few HMV records of Leider. A veritable treasure house! But to get down to details.

The recording is remarkably clear and life-like when one considers that these were made over fifty years ago. Of course, each record side lasts only four minutes and this is a great annoyance in all the selections which take up more than one side, as the continuity must needs be badly broken. What

a trial they must have been. The records themselves are in very fine condition. No broken specimens, and only one or two minor scratches. The man who collected them must have used extreme care, and that, coupled to the fact that the records have lain untouched for the last twenty-five years in a warehouse, make them "almost as good as new."

With these facts in mind we can turn to the content of the records. First, those of Kirsten Flagstad, for there are probably more legends in existence about her than of any other singer. Some say a famous critic fell in love with her the first time he heard her, and thereafter wrote such glowing reports of her singing that his colleagues perforce had to indorse everything she did. Her first recordings (judging by the serial numbers) do not do full justice to her voice, nor would one be inclined to call her a great singer after hearing them. But when one comes to such a recording as the "Abscheulicher" aria from *Fidelio* one realizes that the legends about her were all too true. Oh, that there were a singer today to match this performance! Flagstad had a practically perfect vocal technique and endurance, and it is amazing to hear the ease with which she tosses off the most difficult of phrases. Her interpretations are simple and often quite moving. Yet it is the voice which is the important thing on these new-found records.

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The AMERICAN
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235 EAST 51st STREET

NEW YORK, N. Y.

They are thrilling because of the dazzling vocal technique. Yet, in many of the records, one realizes that the thrill ends there, for many of Madame Flagstad's interpretations leave you quite cold.

What a contrast when we turn to the records of Lotte Lehmann, who was the direct antithesis of Flagstad. Here is a singer who had a pleasing, vibrant voice but with none of the technical proficiency of Flagstad. Yet how these records seem to live. The warmth, the tenderness, the vitality exhibited in these records have never been equalled. Lehmann was a prolific recorder. The Decca records show her early in her career with her voice at its height and with all the famous Lehmann characteristics. The Victor records were made when her artistry was more mature, but when the voice had begun to show, slightly, the effects of time.

One of the gems of this latter collection, however, is a complete recording of the first act of *Die Walküre* with Lehmann as Sieglinde, and the peerless Lauritz Melchior as Siegmund. How fortunate we are to be able to hear how Lehmann built up this characterization from the moment when Siegmund finds the wounded Siegmund in her hut until the rapturous close of the act. The recording abounds in all the finesse that made Lotte Lehmann famous. Such a small thing as the venomous way in which she pronounces the word "schächer" in the "Der Maenner Sippe" aria makes this recording one of the world's masterpieces. But *Die Walküre* is not all. There is also an abridged recording of *Der Rosenkavalier* with Lehmann's now legendary characterization of the Marschallin. And on Decca a phenomenal aria from a now forgotten opera by Richard Strauss, *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Also on this label what is, in my opinion, the greatest version of the *Liebestod*. It is unfortunate that the surfaces of the Decca records are not of the same quality as the Victor, nor for that matter the recording.

And finally to Frida Leider. In a way this singer represents a happy medium between the types of singing exemplified by Flagstad and Lehmann, for she combines the vocal virtuosity of the one with the interpretative insight of the other. From her recordings one senses that she falls short of both these extremes, but one also senses something which is lacking in the others—a thrilling electric "atmosphere". What an experience it must have been to see this woman on the stage. Something must have been happening every minute to keep the listener on the edge of his seat. It is in the way Madame Leider declaims her phrases that this electrical

quality is transmitted through the record. In Isolde's "Narrative and Curse" when Leider comes to the "Fluch dir, Verruchter" her voice starts to shake, and becomes hoarse and rough. Yet one can not condemn it as bad singing, for it so perfectly mirrors the nervous strain under which Isolde is suffering. Here, as in the case of Lehmann's audible breathing, "the end justifies the means."

These then are my experiences upon hearing for the first time these priceless mementoes of an age gone-by; and there is only one conclusion that can be drawn. These records make it very clear that the Golden Age of the 1930's really was *golden* and that singing today is as lead by comparison. Who have we on the operatic stage today to compare with any of these three singers? The answer is, sadly enough, nobody; we can only be thankful to have on records testimony of a vanished greatness. It appears operatic singers of the 1930's only had to sing opera, whereas singers of today sing everything from opera to swing, and of course that new popular music known as "Televioswing", which may account for the change in singing.

Historic Repressings

No historic repressings reached us in time for review but a late announcement from the International Record Collectors' Club states that they intend to release the following re-recordings:

The Four Marguerites (Schubert, Gounod, Berlioz, Boito) by Geraldine Farrar to her own accompaniment. Re-recorded from electrical transcription of broadcast of March 16, 1935 from the Metropolitan Opera House. I. R. C. C. No. 144, 12-inch, price \$2.25 (autographed).

Recitations from *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Country Girl* by Ada Rehan. Re-recorded from a Berliner disc made about 1899. I. R. C. C. No. 5000, 10-inch single-face, price \$1.25.

Les Huguenots — *A cet mot*; sung by Nellie Melba. Re-recorded from a cylinder record of the 1901 Metropolitan performance. I. R. C. C. No. 5002, 10-inch, single-face, price \$1.25.

There is also a re-issue of a previous release, I. R. C. C. No. 31, 12-inch, price \$2.25 containing the arias from *Rienzi* and Mozart's *Titus* as sung by Ernestine Schumann-Heink (listed on page 38 of "The Record Collector's Guide"). This record we have heard and can therefore recommend as unbelievably great singing on the part of a much beloved and maligned personage. —J. M. M.

Swing Music Notes

Enzo Archetti

■ THE FIRST REPORTS TO REACH HERE FROM Europe concerning Ellington's concert tour are veritable rhapsodies of praise for Ellington, his men, and his music. Two concerts were given at the magnificent Palais de Chaillot in Paris before the orchestra left for its scheduled Scandinavian tour and from the reports it seems that the biggest hit was scored by Rex Stewart with his *Boy Meets Horn*.

When we quoted that choice bit of news last month about James P. Johnson we didn't expect to follow it up so soon with news of a recording of one of his large-scale works. Through the kindness of a prominent local importer, a Japanese Polydor record (Number 1384) of Johnson's *Yamekraw — A Negro Rhapsody* was sent to us for comment. Unfortunately, we cannot read Japanese so we cannot quote the information on the label but from the evidence of our ears *Yamekraw* turns out to be a rhapsody for piano and jazz orchestra with a distinct Negro flavor but not much jazz. The unknown soloist plays feelingly but without much swing. The orchestra is a jazz orchestra only in make-up. Its performance is very unjazz-like. Here and there we hear characteristic Jimmy Johnson touches — in the lilt of a melody or the shape of a phrase on the piano — but on the whole this is not jazz nor is it a *Negro* rhapsody. We suspect this is not Johnson's fault but the interpreters' but at any rate we shall have to wait for a more definite version before we can judge James P. Johnson's ability to write in a large form.

The first *Blue Note* releases have been so well received by the public that the sponsors have been encouraged to continue along the path they have chosen. At 4:30 A. M. on April 11 a group of musicians especially selected for their ability were gathered by Blue Note in the Musicraft Recording Studios to wax a series of discs for future release. This hour was chosen because the musicians first had to complete their regular work. This unusual recording session would never have been possible except for Musicraft's cooperation. The musicians chosen were: Frank Newton, trumpet; J. C. Higginbotham, trombone; Teddy Bunn, guitar; Albert Ammons,

piano; Johnny Williams, bass; and Sidney Catlett, drums. They recorded a number of twelve-inch discs, mostly blues, and some trombone and trumpet solos. Two records from this session will have been issued when this appears in print.

Meade Lux Lewis has also recorded a four-side blues for *Blue Note* which will be issued shortly.

The Hot Record Society of New York has extended its activities. It now operates the H. R. S. Record Shop at 827 Seventh Avenue . . . Bud Freeman is no longer at Kelly's Stables . . . A new hot group consisting of Eddie Condon, Pee Wee Russell, Arthur Schutt, George Brunies, and others, has opened at O'Leary's Barn, on West 52nd Street, for an indefinite stay . . . Sharkey Bonano's orchestra is now at Nick's, in the Village . . . Babby Hackett, formerly of Nick's, is now on the road up Boston way. He may follow Teddy Wilson into the Famous Door on 52nd Street. Teddy Wilson and his new orchestra is there now . . . Jack Teagarden and his orchestra move to the famous Blackhawk in Chicago after their stay at the Roseland in New York . . . Harry James with his new orchestra follows Jack Teagarden at the Roseland . . . Willie "The Lion" Smith now has a band of his own.

The death of Herschel Evans left a bad gap in Count Basie's lineup and for a while it looked as if it could not be as ably filled. However, a musician has been found — Buddy Tate. He is stepping into Evans' shoes because he not only plays like Evans but also came from the same home town: Sherman, Texas.

Benny Carter now has his own band. It opened at the Savoy in Harlem for an unlimited stay. His lineup is: Link Mills, Louis Bacon, and Archie Johnson, trumpets; Tyree Glenn, James Archer, and Victor Dickerson, trombones; Cary Fry and James Powell, alto saxes; Cas McCord and Ernest Powell, tenor saxes; Edward Heywood, piano; Arnold Adams, guitar; Hayes Alvis (formerly of Duke Ellington's band), bass; and Teddy Fields, drums. Benny Carter will front the band, arrange for it, and double on alto and trumpet.

Tommy Dorsey takes over Kaye's spot at the Commodore beginning May 15th. He is scheduled for an all summer run in the Palm Room which is usually closed during the summer but which will remain open this year because of the Fair.

Artie Shaw recently signed up with RCA-Victor to the tune of \$100,000 — a two-year contract guaranteeing him twenty-five rec-

ords a year at \$1000 a side. Now that Shaw is King of Swing (for this year!) RCA is playing safe and holding on to him at all costs. There are plenty of rival companies angling for his services.

After a period of comparative obscurity, Don Redman is coming back, in spite of innumerable personnel changes. He recently signed a contract with Victor for some recordings . . . It is said that Chick Webb and his orchestra are slated for the Savoy Ballroom feature at the World's Fair . . . In a recent article in Collier's, Benny Goodman described jitterbugs as "10 percent emotionalism and 500 percent exhibitionism" . . . Harry Jones, the swing pianist often praised in this column, is back again at the Pink Mirror, in North Bergen, New Jersey.

To take the place of the Saturday Night Swing Club, C. B. S. has inaugurated a new swing broadcast called *America Dances* on Sunday nights at 8:00 P. M. The first broadcast took place on March 26th. *America Dances* follows the same general plan as the S. N. S. C. in that it invites prominent orchestras or musicians to sit in at each broadcast. The New Friends of Rhythm appeared on their April 9th program.

The latest re-releases by the U. H. C. A. are: *Jamaica Shout* and *Heartbreak Blues* (Nos. 55-56) by Coleman Hawkins and his Orchestra, a repressing of Okeh 41566 and English Parlophone R-1766; *Potato Head Blues* and *Put 'Em Down Blues* (Nos. 59-60) by Louis Armstrong and his Hot Seven, a repressing of Okeh 8503; and *House of David Blues* by Fletcher Henderson and his Orchestra, and *I Never Knew* by the Chocolate Dandies (Nos. 57-58) are repressings of Melotone M-12216 and English Parlophone R-1815, respectively.

In the Popular Vein

Horace Van Norman

STANDARD POPULAR

AAAA—*Don't Worry 'Bout Me*, and *What Goes Up Must Come Down*. Horace Heidt and his Musical Knights. Brunswick 8334.

■ This pair of tunes comes from the current Cotton Club show and are written by Ted Koehler and Ruby Bloom. *Don't Worry*

'Bout Me is an extremely appealing number and appears likely to be a hit. Heidt dresses it up in a very handsome arrangement which is chiefly notable for introducing to records a new instrument with apparently enormous possibilities called the novachord. A keyboard instrument which is said to simulate with greater or less degree of success the color of many of the standard orchestral instruments, alone and in combination, its use is presently being contested by the Musician's Union as a sort of artistic labor saving device. Whatever its eventual place may be in the musical world, it is capable, from the evidence of this record, of an exceptionally lustrous and pure tone, somewhat like a more human and lifelike organ. It is used here with great effectiveness, and (along with Larry Cotton's splendid vocal) helps to make it a recording of unusual appeal. The tune itself, incidentally, seems to be cribbed from another Ruby Bloom number of several years ago whose name I can't quite recall and which, in turn, was lifted from a highly popular violin encore piece of several decades ago, d'Ambrosio's *Canzonetta*, by name.

..

AAAA—*Our Love*, and *Only When You're In My Arms*. Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Victor 26202.

■ The fox-trotting of the classics goes on apace and the one most likely to duplicate the success of last year's *My Reverie* is the adaptation of the love theme from Tschai-kowsky's *Romeo and Juliet* known as *Our Love*. It is a very crude condensation, with a singularly inept lyric, and a banal "middle" which would make Tschai-kowsky writhe if he could hear it (and we sincerely hope he can't) but the theme itself is of such indestructible beauty that it is practically impervious to the most tasteless man-handling. Fortunately, a few bands possess enough musicianship to do a thing like this without making you blush for their ignorance and Dorsey's is emphatically one of them. His treatment here is restrained and effective, lacking (praise be to Allah) the excruciating over-sentimentality that most bands bring to it. Parenthetically, what a fortune Tschai-kowsky could make today, with his incomparable gift of lush melody. Sort of a super-Berlin!

..

AAA—*The Chestnut Tree*, and *Three Little Fishies*. Hal Kemp and his Orchestra. Victor 26204.

■ *The Chestnut Tree* is the same sort of

frolisome nonsense that made the *Lambeth Walk* a significant phenomenon of 1937, and like its jaunty predecessor, it emanates from England. *Three Little Fishies* is, roughly, an American counterpart of *Chestnut Tree*, so the disc makes a delightful and thoroughly innocent contribution to the gayety of nations, which would be high praise at any time but which is practically equivalent to a benediction with things as they are now. Kemp does both the foreign and domestic didoes with rare good humor and if the disc sells a million copies, as I hope it does, we may yet be able to bring the world to its senses.

AAA—*Begin the Beguine*, and *Oye Tu*. Nano Rodrigo and the Havana-Madrid Orchestra. Victor 26203.

■ Cole Porter's great (and I use the word advisedly) song, *Begin the Beguine*, after a four-year career of steadily augmenting popularity, has yet to receive a thoroughly adequate recording which is completely in the spirit of the number. Artie Shaw's spectacular recording, tremendously effective as it was, had savage undertones entirely foreign to the tune, and all other domestic recordings treated it with little appreciation for its truly unusual qualities. This one, while no more remarkable for its originality than any of the others, seems to capture the essence of the tune a little more successfully than they did and will have to do until a really inspired recording comes along.

AAA—*It's Never Too Late*, and *I Cried For You*. Kate Smith. Victor 26214.

■ After nearly a decade as the premier female popular vocalist of the land, Kate Smith still dominates the field as thoroughly as Bing Crosby dominates the field of male vocalists. There is, indeed, a striking similarity between them, both as people and as artists. It rather boils down to an essential warmth and humanity that pervades everything they do and that will serve to keep them firmly entrenched in the affections of the American public as long as they are able to totter up to a mike. Miss Smith is heard here in one of the better current ballads and an oldie which is now undergoing a rather astonishing rejuvenation, *I Cried For You*, and, she sings them, as always, magnificently.

AA—*Little Sir Echo*, and *Dans Mes Bras*. Wayne King and his Orchestra. Victor 26197.

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77 South 8th Street

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1217 Walnut Street

(Continued on Inside Back Cover)

■ *Little Sir Echo* is one of those innocuous tidbits that are somehow charming in their utter stupidity. A sort of contemporary variant on the *Swiss Echo Song*, it needs such a master of lush as Wayne King to do it justice, and he does.

HOT JAZZ

AAAA—*Viper's Dream*, and *Minor's Swing*. Quintet of the Hot Club of France. Victor 26218.

■ These recordings serve again to demonstrate the fantastic skill of the world's premier hot guitarist, Django Rheinhardt. If there is another guitarist anywhere who can be mentioned in the same breath with him, we'd like to hear him. The American, Joe Sodja, comes the closest of anyone, we believe, but unfortunately Sodja doesn't make records, and until he does, anyone who wants to hear how a hot guitar should be played will have to go to these French recordings. If there is one fault to be found in this particular disc, it is that there is too much Grapelly (a not too distinguished violinist) and not enough Rheinhardt. But the little there is is superlative.

• •

AAAA—*Home James*, and *Jesse*. Harry James and the Boogie Woogie Trio. Brunswick 8350.

■ More amazing virtuoso performances by Harry James, that frail young man who blows such a powerful trumpet. It will be recalled that there was another frail young man with a horn who answered to the name of Bix, and if anyone now in public view is competent to wear the mantle of the fabulous Bix, it is surely James. Not that there is even a remote similarity between their work. James is nervous where Bix was relaxed, and his tone lacks the beauty of Bix's. But he plays with more rhythmic excitement than anyone we have ever heard, not excluding Armstrong in his heyday. As in last month's coupling, he is here variously assisted by Messrs. Johnson, Dougherty, Williams and Ammons.

• •

AAA—*Such A Tender Night*, and *Walking Home in Spring*. Alec Wilder Octet. Brunswick 8357.

■ Two more of Wilder's fascinating little sketches, these are both in the melancholy, introspective style of *Little Girl Grows Up*.

Completely distinctive and original as they are, the idiom because a trifle cloying with too incessant repetition. Taken individually they are truly charming. In a group, Wilder's harmonic and instrumental clichés become somewhat too apparent. Whether Wilder is capable of versatility remains to be seen, but be that as it may, he has already left an imprint entirely his own on American light music and we strongly suspect that it will be a permanent one.

OTHER CURRENT POPULAR RECORDING OF MERIT

(The following are rated from quality of performance regardless of record quality.)

AAA—*Cherokee*, Count Basie and his Orchestra. Decca 2406.

AAA—*You Set Me on Fire*, and *Shoemaker's Holiday*. Jimmie Lunceford and his Orchestra. Vocalion 4712.

AAA—*Rock-a-Bye Basie*, and *Baby Don't Tell On Me*. Count Basie and his Orchestra. Vocalion 4747.

AAA—*One Night Stand*, and *One Foot in the Groove*. Artie Shaw and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10202.

AAA—*Scotch and Soda*, and *Echoes of Harlem*. Charlie Barnet and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10210.

AAA—*Song of the Wanderer*, and *Stomp Off and Let's Go*. Bob Crosby and his Orchestra. Decca 2379.

AAA—*Sunrise Serenade*, and *Moonlight Serenade*. Glenn Miller and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10214.

AAA—*A Fuble a Rumba*, and *La Paloma*. The Merry Macs. Decca 2404.

AA—*Ja Da*, and *Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man*. Nan Wynn, acc. by Walter Gross and his Orchestra. Vocalion 4737.

AA—*Pastel Blue*, and *Rehearsin' For a Nervous Breakdown*. John Kirby and his Orchestra. Decca 2467.

AA—*Y' Had It Comin' to You*, and *What Goes Up Must Come Down*. Ethel Waters with Edward Mallory and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10207.

AA—*Save It Pretty Mama*, and *Hear Me Talkin' To You*. Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra. Decca 2405.

AA—*I Can Read Between the Lines*, and *Love's a Necessary Thing*. Mildred Bailey and her Orchestra. Vocalion 4749.

AA—*Ain't the Gravy Good*, and *Boudoir Benny*. Cootie Williams and his Rug Cutters. Vocalion 4726.

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 118 Liberty Street

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Edited by

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